

Patron Saint

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Patron Saint

by [isaDanCurtisproduction](#)

Summary

Peter is desperate. Hungry and alone on the streets, he's ready and willing to do anything to change his situation, even if just for a night. And sharing a stranger's bed would be no hardship, especially when the alternatives include dumpster-diving for dinner and sleeping, arms wrapped around him, beneath a chilly and indifferent sky.

Then a man named Wade Wilson steps into his life.

Notes

I think I promised I'd have something by mid-August. It is now mid-October.
But hey, at least this is something! I hope you enjoy :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Patron Saint of Street Corners

Peter stood on a street corner somewhere in the lower Bronx. The street lamp behind him illuminated his back, gave a wobbly halo to his brown, greasy spikes of hair. His arms were wrapped around his torso, not so much because he was cold than because he needed a concrete action to help keep his life from finally shattering around him. It might have looked at least a little bit like he was trying to keep warm in the stinging chill of the night, because at this time of year, while the days were balmy, the nights had an edge, but to tell the truth, Peter could barely even feel the wind, though it nipped at his nose and whipped his baggy hoodie around his lithe frame.

He was too much in his head to think of anything as unimportant as the wind. It was cool, yes, Peter would have realized if he'd thought to be conscious of it, but it wasn't important in the face of his current conundrum.

It was late, too, but when Peter looked out at the darkened street, he did not see the shambling cars that passed, headlights illuminating empty storefronts, brick and mortar, flashes of light reflecting on glass. He did not see the all-night diner waitress making her way home after a long shift, tired, pulling her too-large, threadbare jacket tighter around her against the cold, her feet moving swiftly, the plastic soles of her grease-stained work shoes slapping against the concrete. Peter did not see the huddled masses of clothing and hair that would have passed for garbage except they shivered in the cold, and the girls and boys, in clothes too thin, too small for the weather who strutted and posed and who got into cars with strangers and came out with more money than they had before.

Peter's eyes saw these people, but he didn't notice them or even realize they passed. He was aware of nothing outside of him, not the cold or the cars, the dark or the people. All he could think of, all he could process, was that for the first time in his life he had nothing. Or maybe more accurately, he had no one.

He'd known for a while. For months. He'd known ever since the ambulance had taken Aunt May away from him, screaming into the night, that he was going to be alone, but it had only hit him just then that he had truly nothing and no one. The Hospital bills and years of debt had taken all the money that Peter would have inherited, not that there would have been much anyway, and then had taken the house, and Peter might have been able to salvage more than he had (a photo album, his garish suit of red and blue, his beaten but trusty camera, the clothes he was wearing) if he'd had somewhere to put them. Or somewhere to put himself.

The bank took the house and everything else went to the auction block except what Peter could stuff into his backpack. His wallet held an ID, a library card, and two dollars in change. And cancer took Aunt May.

So Peter stood on a street corner, ignorant of the cold and the dark, and came to the startling revelation that he had nothing, and could go nowhere, and maybe if he hadn't gotten Gwen Stacy killed, or caused Harry Osborn's mind to break, or encouraged (in an act of selflessness that always ended up blowing up in his face) Mary Jane to go west to follow her dream of being on the silver screen, he'd have a place to sleep for the night. And maybe if he had been a few years younger, he'd be young enough to be a ward of the state. But he was 20 years old, and he'd skipped too much of the previous year of college visiting Aunt May in the hospital and bussing tables to keep his scholarship with which he couldn't afford his books let alone his classes, and he'd skipped out too much on his busboy job to visit Aunt May when she'd gotten worse, and now he was unemployed and hadn't been able to sign up for classes when they'd opened, and he was homeless. And all he could think, besides the spiraling depression of having no one and nothing, and besides

his internal hysterics of the irony behind his dual role now of being a superhero and being homeless (not that he'd been out stopping bad guys much lately), was that at least he had New York.

Which was dumb. New York was nothing, had nothing to give to a too-skinny boy with nothing but the clothes on his back, an aging photo album, and a beat-up camera. And a suit which Peter didn't even know he deserved to put on anymore. New York didn't care about him any more than it cared about the shuffling piles of people curled on door stoops and below fire escapes that Peter tended to join when the apartment building roofs and central park tree branches were too far for his tired limbs to carry him to.

A spark caught his eye, a glitter of refracted light that kaleidoscoped through the shadowy night just long enough to register as not-normal-night-lights before it disappeared. Peter's head jerked up, and his thoughts, thoughts of nothingness and a lack of future and a lack of *love* skittered away like pebbles from beneath the wheels of the bicycle Uncle Ben had got for him for his fourth birthday. He'd crashed that bike the next day and they hadn't been able to afford a replacement till he was thirteen. *That* bike, Peter assumed, was to be auctioned off along with everything else he couldn't fit in his back pack. Not the greatest loss he'd encountered.

His eyes searched the night for a nanosecond, seeing through the shadows, his eyes adjusting to the darkness in a way that still felt new, but only when he thought to be consciously aware of it, before landing on what had caught his eye. It was a shirt with a thousand golden sequins that glittered and reflected the light from a street lamp a block from Peter and across the street. The shirt was halter style, with no sleeves to speak of, and it ended well above the navel, though the wearer's short skirt started at her hips. More glints and glimmers of light shone from the shirt as she, the wearer, bent over further, sticking almost her entire head through the driver side window of a dark-colored sedan. Light reflected again, a moment later, when she straightened up, and Peter could see glitter too around the eyes and glitter sprinkled in her hair. She slid around the front of the car, walking slowly, as if knowing that whoever was watching wanted to watch a little while longer, both the driver of the car and Peter, though for vastly different reasons, and then she opened the door and slid into the passenger seat, and the sedan pulled away from the curb.

Peter blinked and looked around, wanting to see if anyone else had noticed what he had. But no one else was looking, and no one seemed to care. Not the bundles against the sides of buildings that Peter knew were people, nor the graveyard shift workers coming or going to their graveyard shifts, nor the other women and some few men dressed scantily in sequins and glitter. No. No one seemed to care that a girl with a shirt like a billion yellow stars had just left in a strange car.

But then, Peter figured, and had to give himself a hard time about it, no one cared about the waitresses and construction workers and clerks and bellhops and chefs and taxi drivers who were all going this way and that. Just because it was night did not make her story different or special, and just because Peter was sinking in his mind, sinking into loneliness and despair and the numbness that comes with a lack of energy to deal with the despair and hopelessness, didn't mean that anyone else should have to have to focus on a girl just doing her job.

And no one worried, Peter supposed, and that wasn't fair, but that was reality. No one cared about this girl, young, too young, as younger than Peter, who was out at night getting into cars with no protection, and no one cared about a boy, though he was an adult, who'd just lost the one person who loved him unconditionally, and likewise had lost his home and his happiness.

And then the Sedan returned, and the girl stepped out of the passenger door, her shirt shining just as brightly as it had before. She leaned back into the car before she shut the door, and then she closed the door with finality, wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, and didn't even watch as

the car sped away. Her hands, long lacquered fingernails at the end of long, pale fingers, uncurled, revealing a wad of cash which she hastily stuffed into her bra. And then she returned to the corner she'd been at and stuck out a leg, popped a hip, and waited.

Peter's eyes followed hers as she tracked passing cars, as she whistled at the ones who slowed, but his mind hadn't left the wad of money.

He gulped.

It was at that moment that his stomach gurgled, weak and pitiful. He couldn't remember when he'd last eaten anything more than a scant few fries from thrown away McDonalds bags or a donut hole dropped onto the sidewalk, and he felt hollow, carved out, an empty husk, and out of everything he wanted (Aunt May back, warm and alive; a warm place to sleep, preferably with a blanket; to bury himself in a hole and never come out till he was forgotten and the shame of being a hero and homeless and weak and pathetic could be forgotten as well), a chocolate milkshake was pretty high on his list. And a burger, god, he'd do *anything* for a burger.

His eye returned involuntarily to the girl with the sparkling shirt. *She* didn't look like she was starving. She didn't look like she couldn't remember when her last real meal had been.

Peter gulped again, and pulled tighter on his book bag strap.

It wasn't like he was inexperienced in sexual matters. He knew his way around the...er...genitalia. Of both...uh...of... yes.

The point was that he wasn't a stranger to sex. But he was quickly becoming a stranger to readily available nourishment and as much as he just wanted to curl into a tight ball and never come out and live that way forever, curled tight, until the gaping and growing hole in his heart consumed him completely, something, nagging in the back corner of his brain resisted giving up completely. He was afraid that Aunt May hadn't raised a quitter after all.

Another car drove down the street, slowing when it came closer to Peter, to the girl with the sparkling shirt, to the others. The car crept down the road, and Peter got the impression of perusal. Who would the car stop in front of? Who was showing enough skin to tantalize but not so much as to ruin any mystique? Who had the biggest eyes? The thinnest waist? Who was eating tonight?

Peter's stomach grumbled, and the hollow gnawing feeling rose in him again like a tidal wave. He could often ignore his hunger (for sustenance, for friendship, for undying love) by thinking of other things (destitution, loneliness, the hopelessness of existence) but when it did cross his mind it seemed to bend him in half with the emptiness. He felt he would crumple, crinkle and flatten like a soda can beneath a boot heel. There was nothing inside him to hold him up, no core of iron, no pillar to raise him. He was hollow, and the hunger was a growl, growing in size, and roaring louder and louder until everything sounded like white noise beating at his brain, beating, beating until all he could do was hold onto his book back straps like it would keep him steady and lock his knees against the swaying, and it was really a simple decision.

Obvious.

Duh.

Yes, he would suck a dick for a burger and a strawberry milkshake.

It was a no-brainer. He felt he would *die* of the hunger, and the nagging voice in the corner of his brains said, *Of course, if you don't eat you will actually die of hunger*, and it felt like the

displacement of weight on Peter's bed, the slight shift, when Aunt May would sit on the edge of the mattress and keep watch over him when he was sick.

The roaring in his ears faded about the same time as a different girl, one with eyes made large through thorough use dark blue eye shadow and darker black eyeliner, crawled into the back seat of a silver SUV, and Peter's mind was made up, and the hollowness lessened long enough for him to turn on his heel.

He was going to find a hiding place for his bag (a good one, high-up if needed, secured by synthetic web) and find a corner, and suck a dick, and then buy a burger. He had a plan, one that would get him fed.

And then he immediately ran face-first into a broad chest wrapped in a dark leather jacket that looked oily slick in the dim light of the street lamp.

"Whoa there, hot stuff. Steady," said the owner of the chest, and Peter looked up to see a tanned man with wispy, curling blond hair bleached almost white by the sun. He had a strong nose and a wide smile, but when Peter tried to focus harder everything went a little fuzzy. No, not that extreme, it just felt like there weren't any solid edges to focus on. Peter blinked and blamed it on the lack of food. He was so hungry his eyes weren't focusing correctly. That had to be what was happening. But when Peter looked up into the eyes of the man, he saw the crisp clear blue of the iris. And he finally decided that his eyes were just playing tricks on him. The grin was easy, a little too wide to be anything but lewdly mischievous, but it wasn't really predatory, and Peter's shoulder's immediately relaxed. He didn't know this man, but he seemed kind, and Peter's Spidey-sense wasn't going off so he was probably safe.

"I'm fine," Peter mumbled, embarrassed. He should be more aware of his surroundings, especially considering how vulnerable he was (Yes, physical strength proportionate to a spider, but he was weak with hunger and dizzy with thoughts of his future). But no, he wasn't going to give in to timidity. Peter threw his head back in false confidence. This is what he was here to do, wasn't it? This is what he decided upon. He wasn't going to back down now that there was an opportunity presenting itself. And honestly, this man was not hard to look at. If he had to choose someone...

"See something you like?" Peter asked, and tried to make his voice light and sultry, like he knew exactly what he was doing. He wasn't quite sure he pulled it off, and he was still wearing a dirty t-shirt under a dirtier hoodie, a stained and old pair of jeans, and carrying his school book bag slung over his shoulder. He wasn't sure he was fooling anybody, but the man didn't seem to notice. He gave him another one of those appraising looks.

"Hmm," the man said, and made a show of looking down Peter's frame again. "Why, are you selling?"

Peter's chin went up, and then he dropped it because he wasn't sure if that was sexy or not. He had the feeling that 'defiant, dirty, college dropout' wasn't an attractive look, but again, the man seemed not to mind. And in fact, it faintly worried Peter how easy this was, for the man to look past Peter's obviously troubled exterior, just to, well, get at what was beneath his clothes.

A sick feeling rose in Peter, but it was quickly suppressed by the overwhelming hollowness in his stomach. Some things you had to sacrifice, Peter knew, and doing what you had to to get a sandwich or a warm place to sleep for the night wasn't shameful. It was just creepy, thinking about what this man was seeing in him, and realizing that the man must honestly not care about Peter's gunky appearance in the face of well, getting some.

But that was an existential dilemma for another day. Peter didn't have time for that kind of worry.

Peter, ever aware of incriminating himself, said, "I'm not opposed to a little compensation for my," he paused to think of a way to say, "dick-sucking," without actually having to say those words out of his own mouth... "company," he decided on, and added it on tactfully.

The man leaned back on his heels and let out a chuckle. "What a polite street-walker you are," and Peter didn't even get upset because, well, yes, Peter supposed that that's what he was tonight, and what exactly was wrong with that? "Alright," the man continued, "I'm thinking that you are going to be perfect, you pretty little thing. I've made up my mind. I came out to hand pick the best of the best" (oh buddy, Peter thought, you could not be more wrong) "and you are obviously it. And you are smokin' to boot! Hot damn, have I hit the jackpot!"

Peter wanted to remind the man that he was buying sex with someone, so that wasn't actually some sort of good bargain. Many people have sex without any type of monetary loss, and it was that moment that Peter realized he didn't know what the pay scale was for this sort of thing. He was pretty sure there was one. Sucking dick, after all, couldn't be worth the same as bending over for the man. But, Peter hadn't exactly studied up for this pop quiz. A moment's worth of cold terror slid down his spine.

You're Spiderman, he reminded himself, if anything happens, just smash him over the head and high tail it! But that didn't make Peter feel necessarily as comforted as he hoped it would. He was strong, yes, but today he was weak, the weakest he'd been in a long time. He felt like he could sleep for ages. *After the milkshake, he thought, after the milkshake and the burger, and much after whatever this man has planned. Then you can sleep.*

"So," Peter said, "what is it you...desire?" Peter rolled that word around in his mouth. Trying to see how it tasted coming out. He wasn't sure about it.

The man looked suddenly serious, and until that moment Peter didn't realize how jovial the man had seemed. It was a worrying thought, but what about what was happening *wasn't* worrying? Exactly.

"I have a, mmm, proposition," the man said, and Peter didn't take a step back but he tensed to flee if the man said anything even close to dangerous. Or to punch the man in the face. "Feel free," the man continued, "to say no. You can walk away right now, and I'll just find another pretty little thing, though I doubt any of the other sex workers I'd come across would hold a candle to your booty's glory, Baby Boy. Can I call you Baby Boy?" He didn't wait for an answer. "But I have a proposition that'll get you a lot of pay out, sweet thang. A big pay out. Keep you off the streets for a couple weeks at least."

Peter found himself salivating at the very thought, and had to remind himself very firmly that he had standards, and he couldn't make his mind up about a thing just because he was starving.

Yes I can, he said, one part of his brain disagreeing with the other.

Peter tried to keep his expression calm. He could be cool and collected. He could be like stone. He could.

"Let me buy you for a week," said the man, with something close to caution, "and I'll pay you a million dollars."

"Sweet sassafras!" Peter yelped. "That's a lot of money! Holy cow! Where do you even *get* that kind of money?" With no regard to the idea that he was supposed to be cool, collected, calm, made of stone, Peter continued. "I've seen Pretty Women, I'm pretty sure no one is gonna pay a million dollars for a prostitute, even for a week of the most 50 Shades stuff you can think of."

"And I don't even require any Mr. Gray will see you now, shit," the man said happily.

Peter narrowed his eyes at the man and crossed his arms over his chest. "I'm suspicious of you. You don't *look* like a billionaire who doesn't know the value of a dollar."

"I'm not," the man agreed, "a billionaire. I have a few millions here and there, but they don't usually stick around for long."

"Because of stuff like this?" Peter asked. "Are you just spectacularly bad at money management?" Peter didn't even care that he was talking to a potential client (hah! Client) like this. A million dollars was a shit ton of money.

The man shrugged. "Pretty much. I think I spent fourteen-k on red-eared sliders last month and then had to dumpster dive for food for three weeks before I made it back. Of course, the dumpster behind Mario's has awesome dig after 10pm so I kept dining there past when I could pay for my own shit, but what's some garbage between your teeth?"

Peter found himself silently agreeing, but he was curious about another part of the man's statement. "Red-eared slider?" he asked.

The man nodded. "Turtles. Got little red diamonds over their ears. They go slide-slide pretty fast." He shrugged. "That's why I got them: to race. And of course some of that money went to airfare to get me to Florida to release them into the everglades after the race was over, but a round-trip flight to the orange state doesn't cost *that* much."

Peter choked. "You spent fourteen thousand dollars buying turtles? Which you then released into the wild after a single race?!"

The man tilted his head to the side. "Yep."

Peter let out a wavering breath. Maybe this was real. Maybe the man really had million dollars (doubtful) to waste on rent boys in the Bronx. But it wouldn't hurt to go with it for now. He'd just ask for some money upfront and then bail if anything turned freaky.

"Alright," Peter said, sounding way more confident than he felt. "Well, I can't say no to a week with a professional turtle-racer." The man snorted and grinned so wide Peter couldn't help but smile back. "But I'm going to ask for something upfront. Just to prove you're not pulling my leg."

"Sure," the man said, easy-breezy, his smile not even wavering, as if he'd been expecting this.

Right, he probably had been. This was probably a very normal safety measure. Peter really needed to start figuring this stuff out.

"Ok," Peter breathed out, trying to think of a number that wasn't too high or too low. Why? Why hadn't he re-watched *Pretty Woman* more recently?, "how about--"

"Ten thousand," the man said, and pulled a roll of money from the inner pocket of his jacket, "in cash."

"Holy shit," Peter whispered, eyes going impossibly wide. Part of him felt frozen in shock, but then he noticed his hand reaching out and the man dropped the roll into it easily. "Holy shit," Peter whispered again, because the number he was thinking of was still in the hundreds. He turned the roll over in his hands, and noticed that every bill was a Benjamin. "Holy shit," he said again, because really, that about summed it up.

"Perfect," the man said, "now you have that insurance you should probably put it somewhere you won't lose it, and we can go."

Peter wasn't going to lose it. "Sure," Peter said, still in a whisper, still in shock. He dropped his bag off his shoulder and in a moment the roll of cash was stashed in the dark recesses of his book bag, folded inside a part of his suit. He pulled the bag back over his shoulder.

"Now if we're going to be roommates for a week," the man said, phrasing what would actually be happening very oddly, "I think we should introduce ourselves. I'm Wade." He held his hand out for a shake and Peter grasped it.

"Peter," Peter said without much thought towards secret identities or hiding anything really. Ten thousand dollars was sitting in his book bag right now. Holy shit.

"Nice to meet'cha', Peterino," the man—Wade—said with a laugh. "Now let's get out of here. I've got a place all set up for us."

Peter gulped, but he'd made his decision.

A million dollars.

"Ok," Peter said with a confidence he didn't feel. "Let's go."

Patron Saint of Milkshakes

Chapter Notes

Really sorry for the wait between these chapters. For some reason I thought it'd be a good idea to participate in NaNoWriMo this year, and while I dig what I'm writing, it is getting in the way of my fic-writing, and October was just a mess all around. Happy belated Halloween though! Halloween's the best!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The man—Wade—led him at a comfortable pace to a nicer side of town, and into a ritzy—a very ritzy hotel. He'd obviously already booked a room, and when he led Peter through the doorway and into the elegant and lavish apartment-sized hotel suite Peter almost pissed his pants. There was a kitchen, (not a kitchenette, a full-sized kitchen,) a giant living area with plush, gold-colored furniture and a mahogany coffee table. The television set was at least the size of Delaware. There were four different bedrooms, all with king sized beds, and each with a separate bathroom. Peter could have curled up in the giant bathtub, he really could have. But the pièce de résistance (shut up, Peter knows he should have taken Spanish in high school instead of French, but he was a rebel, and it's not like he actually remembered enough of it to have a conversation) was the room service menu that Wade thrust into his hands as soon as he sat them both on the couch.

Peter had not expected this level of foreplay, but when he'd looked at Wade weird, Wade had scoffed. "I like my boys well-fed, my little harlot. I know you probably don't get romanced a lot in your line of work, but I'm probably different from any other client you've ever had. I'll bet you this week will be the strangest of your life. Cross my heart."

Peter doubted that (he'd once accidentally hit Doc Ock with a laser that had shrunk him into a peanut, which Peter had then deposited at SHIELD's downtown office, which had gotten him in a lot of trouble with Fury when Maria Hill almost ate the Peanut-man. *That* had been a fucking weird week). Having sex with a stranger for a week while the guy bought him awesome expensive food? Ok, not Peter's normal day-to-day life, but honestly could be weirder. It didn't even hit top ten on the weird scale.

"Well I'm not going to argue with you," Peter said, looking down at the menu and almost drooling. "Buy me whatever you want. No complaints from me."

His eyes skimmed the black leather board with gold stenciled words, and let out the softest of sighs, barely an audible breath, when his eyes got to the beverage section.

"What?" Wade asked, amused. Peter looked up to see Wade looking at him, his chin resting on one hand, with a small, genuine-looking smile. The man's blond hair fell across his impossibly blue eyes, but he didn't shift them away. Peter looked down at the board.

"Milkshake," Peter explained, avoiding Wade's soft gaze.

Wade was too nice. Not at all how Peter imagined a trick would treat a hooker. It made him a little uncomfortable, but *food*. Food came first, his comfort came, like, eighteenth.

The man's laugh was more like a sharp bark. It startled Peter, and he looked up to see that the man's wide grin was soft too, a little hazy. Peter rubbed his eyes. Maybe it wasn't kindness Peter was seeing, but the same hazy glow he'd seen when trying to examine Wade's face on that street corner. He was just tired and hungry and his eyes weren't focusing correctly. He ignored the fact that his eyes had no problems focusing on the menu or the tv or the room in general.

"Food too," Wade insisted. "I'm not just getting you a dessert drink. Order a steak or..." he tried to read the menu upside down, "a foie gras, whatever the fuck that is."

"Fat liver?" Peter guessed. Wade gave him an impressed look. "No, high school French, don't be impressed. I remember, like, nothing of it."

Wade shook his head. "Still cool. But like, don't order it. Liver is gross. Liver from a fat animal of unknown origin? Grosser!"

Peter laughed, half from surprise, before his stomach made a dangerously loud rumble, and his cheeks reddened. A starving prostitute, not very professional.

"What do you want?" Wade demanded, and snatched the menu board so he could read it too. "I'm ordering grub A-sap, so snap to it! Let's go, pretty boy, hussle hussle."

"Hussle Hussy," Peter agreed and Wade snorted.

"So what d'you want?"

"Burger and a milkshake," Peter breathed out.

"Chocolate?" The man asked. "Vanilla?" He grimaced, exaggeratedly so and Peter couldn't help but laugh again.

"Strawberry, obviously."

"Obviously," Wade agreed, and picked up the corded phone that sat on an end table beside the couch. He pushed a button and put the receiver to his ear.

It was then that Peter realized, quite belatedly, that it must be nearing five in the morning, which was waaay past an appropriate time to be ordering food. No one would even be awake now. They'd have to wait until at least six or seven for the kitchen to be up and running.

"Wait," Peter hissed, turning to Wade, at the same time Wade said into the receiver, "Yes, I'd like to order room service up in this bitch."

Wade looked at Peter with mild bemusement, and Peter looked back at Wade with wide, wide eyes.

"Please," Wade tacked on under Peter's gaze.

"That was not the problem," Peter continued hissing, and then his words caught up to him. "No, yes, always say please. But it's the time!"

"What's the time?" Wade questioned, eyes growing wider. He looked stranger like that, his eyes slightly unfocused. Or maybe it was Peter's eyes that were unfocused. All of Wade looked a little hazy, still, in the warm light cast by the chandelier (and yes, Peter had stared and stared and stared at the sparkling cut glass above him when he'd first walked into the room). It was the hunger, he decided. His eyes just weren't focusing right.

Peter shook himself. Time kept spiraling. He needed his brain to focus, no matter what his eyes were doing. "It's 5 am," Peter hissed even louder.

"So?" Wade asked, genuinely sounding confused.

"The kitchen will be closed!"

Wade made a 'pshaw' type noise, and then tilted the phone a little, as if someone had just come back on the line. And indeed, Peter could hear the faint wisps of voices that he would have, a week ago, been able to hear through the distance. But he was tired, and his body was failing him, and he was desperate for money.

"Yeah, room fourteen-oh-oh. Send up a milkshake. No! A pitcher of milkshake. And five burgers. You aren't judging me, are you? I'm a growing boy! I need my nutrients!!!" Wade waited the appropriate amount of time for whoever was on the other line to assure him that he was indeed not being judged. "Good," Wade said and then slammed the phone back into the cradle. With a cheerful grin he turned to Peter. "Well, the food should be up in ten minutes if that man knows what's good for him. And then I can fatten you up before eating you, Gretel."

"First, I'm Hansel any way you look at it," Peter pointed out, "and second, you sounded pretty dangerous just then." Peter tried to sound light and joking. "What, you gonna shoot up the place if the food isn't here in four seconds flat?"

"That's right, Baby," Wade said, and then pulled his hand from behind him in the shape of guns. "Pew, pew! I'm an outlaw!"

Peter laughed, a little relieved. Wade had just been joking. It wasn't actually a murderous asshole who Peter was going to sleep with tonight. And of course, if Wade did end up being a murderous asshole, Peter could always beat him up when it came to a head. And then, "But you actually ordered room service. I can't believe it."

Wade furrowed his brow. "That I'd feed you up? I'm paying you some sweet, sweet cash for this week, you think I can't pay for a burger and a milkshake?"

Peter shook his head. "It's five-oh-hell in the fucking morning. The kitchen can't be open right now."

Wade grinned, wide. "You've obviously never been to an upscale, hoity toity establishment like this before, my Lad of the Night. The kitchen is always open and room service is always ready. They are here to please."

As am I, Peter thought to himself, and then shook his head. This was the price. This was what he was willing to do to eat. He'd be here to please, and then in a week he'd walk away with enough cash to rent himself a nice apartment and maybe start attending night classes or something.

And with that thought Peter realized that he was being a very bad prostitute. Or, of what he knew of prostitutes from watching *Pretty Woman* and *Criminal Minds*. He wasn't being sexy, or alluring, or anything even remotely like someone who was being paid to sleep with someone else. He was acting, like, well, himself. And Wade seemed like a nice guy, who, under different circumstances, would have made a good friend. And who, in this circumstance, was, so far, not getting his money's worth of Peter.

Peter, was, if nothing else, honest. He would give what he was being paid to give. And in addition to sex, Peter had no doubt that he was being paid to give a good show, so he leaned back into the

cushions of the couch and ran a hand through his (greasy, so greasy, don't think about how long it's been since a shower) hair. He put on what he hoped was a sultry expression.

"So," he said, pulling it out and softening his voice. He could definitely be a prostitute. Shut up. He tilted his chin, and smirked. That was sexy, right? He could be sexy. Don't think about it, don't think about it.

"Nope," Wade said with a grin, popping the 'p.'

Peter blinked, and his chin automatically dropped. "I'm sorry?"

"Food first," Wade reiterated.

"Um," Peter said, un-sexily. He knew it was unsexy because his mouth had dropped open and he was definitely staring at the bigger (hotter, honestly so hot) man with wide eyes. "What?" Peter questioned, trying, really trying very hard, to sound sure of himself, and failing most miserably, "I can't start, ah, um," Peter floundered for the right word, "trying to entrance you? Before food?" The statements sounded more like a question, which irritated Peter, but his irritation didn't help him sound more confident either, so what was the point?

Wade snorted, and then snorted harder and collapsed back onto the couch next to him. "*Entrance* me? What are you? A snake trying to hypnotize a rodent before he kills? Am *I* the rodent? Am I a *rabbit*? God, child, what the hell? This isn't National Geographic. Or *Pretty Woman*."

Peter huffed and crossed his arms in faux offense. "How dare you. In this scenario I believe *I* would be the rabbit. And yes, sue me, I *do* like *Pretty Woman*."

Wade laughed, wide and genuine, and it made Peter smile.

"What would you call it then?" Peter asked, slouching down into a more comfortable position. If Wade didn't want him to be sexy, all the easier for him.

"Seduction would work," Wade said easily, "or temptation. Tempt me, Peter, and so on. Or attract, charm, enchant. Lure me into your clutches, snake-boy. Sweep me off my feet. Beguile, bewitch between the sheets. Turn me on, come on to me, meet me for a rendezvous. Entice, enthrall, invite, induce." He grinned wide, his pearly teeth flashing in the light of the chandelier. "There. See? There are options."

Peter let his mind wander over the verbs he'd just been presented with. "Fine. Seduce, or enthrall, or bewitch, or tempt. You won't let me *beguile* you before dinner arrives?" He tilted his head to the side, momentarily sidetracked. "Or would it be breakfast? It's a little late for midnight snack, but I don't believe in breakfast before I've slept. Of course, it's not quite dinner either, and it's definitely not lunch."

Wade snorted a laugh. "Why label it? It's food. It's scrum-diddly-umptious, if you'll allow me to quote my good friend Ned Flanders. It's good for you. You're going to eat it." He shrugged. "What else matters?"

Just then a knock sounded from the door, and with a quick smile, Wade was on his feet and opening the door to a smart looking bellhop pushing a silver cart. They talked in low voices, and Peter could have listened in, but his body was starting to realize how soft the couch was, and he felt inexplicably like he was sinking into its softness. He didn't realize that his eyes had started to drift closed until Wade was shaking his shoulder gently, and Peter's eyes flickered open. He pushed himself forward a little so he wasn't leaning back into the couch, tried to keep his back

straight to keep him upright so he wouldn't sink back into the warm softness. He fought to keep his eyes open. He fought, and he won.

"There you go," Wade said softly, his voice pitched just low enough not to break through the soft blanket the night had wrapped around Peter. Peter shook himself, tried to shake off the feeling of muted sleepiness that was dragging at him, and then he saw the milkshake, the burgers and fries, and his eyes flew open, all pretenses of sleep eradicated by the suddenly urgent grumbling of his stomach.

Wade looked at Peter, at Peter's wide-eyed study of the food settled on the coffee table before him, then looked at the food itself. "What are you waiting for?" the man demanded, back to his boisterous self, and the muted softness of the early morning broke around Peter and he practically lunged towards the food, only stopping himself at the last moment from shoveling the food straight into his mouth. Aunt May had raised him better than that.

He tore his mind away from any thoughts of his Aunt. They were painful. And memories of Aunt May had no place here, in this hotel room with this stranger and his money.

More carefully, not quite daintily, and definitely not slow enough to be considered controlled, but more carefully, Peter reached for a burger and in two bites it was gone. He reached for another, and it was gone just as quickly, as were the third and fourth. He took a second to swallow, to breathe around the sudden weight in his stomach, and then the milkshake was being pressed into his hand, and he took it with vigor that he shouldn't have had the energy for and sucked at the straw. His eyes fluttered closed in pleasure, and he wasn't even ashamed to be caught out when Wade laughed lightly. He was in love with this milkshake and nothing would change that.

When Peter's straw made a struggling noise, and Peter looked down to see his glass empty of nothing but strawberry dregs, he groaned, whole-heartedly.

Wade patted Peter's shoulder sympathetically. "There-there, tiger. There's more where that came from," and he produced a pitcher of milkshake which he used to top-up Peter's glass. Peter sighed in wonderment.

"I'm in love," Peter said in a soft, high voice.

"With little ol' me?" Wade asked and fluttered his eyelashes.

"With this milkshake, you ol' perv," Peter corrected, and oh, right, his filter was flaking away the sleepier he got, and boy was he ready to sleep for a thousand years.

But Wade didn't take offense, if anything, he laughed harder. "Now you've got one burger left, Peter-Peter-strawberry-eater. You gonna gobble that thing up, or—?"

Peter waved a hand, and then pulled his mouth away from the straw long enough to say, "Feel free," and then returned to the godliness that was a strawberry milkshake.

"Don't gotta tell me twice, pretty boy," Wade said, and snatched at the burger himself.

It wasn't too much later, about three-milkshakes and an empty pitcher in, that Peter felt himself fading again. So tired was he, and so long had it been that he'd had a place to sleep that had more of a roof than a weathered awning, and was warmer than what his shirtsleeves could provide, that he felt himself drifting off, and not even the thought of a stranger there with him (though at this point, it felt like he knew Wade well) could make him keep his eyes open. For the first time since Aunt May had—since Aunt May, his Spidey-sense had stopped ringing a constant alarm of

paranoia and danger. He was safe here. If something happened to change that he'd be awake in a heartbeat, but for the moment he was safe.

“Conked out, huh, big boy,” Peter thought he heard Wade say from somewhere far away, or somewhere very close but very muted. “Well I guess I’m not surprised. You look like you haven’t eaten in a year, and haven’t slept in even longer.” Peter felt the world fall down around him, the couch drop out of existence, and his mind flailed for a nanosecond, but his body was nothing but dead weight, and then Peter noticed the pressure against the back of his knees and against his spine, and he realized that Wade was carrying him. With that wave of relief came the full darkness of sleep. He didn’t even feel when Wade tucked him into bed.

Chapter End Notes

Well how about that? Our boys get their milkshakes and burgers and a good long rest, and Peter fails pretty horribly at seducing anybody. Good to go, Pete.

I'm going to try to get to the next chapter quicker than I got to this one, but NaNoWriMo is kicking my ass and I'm only 5 days in. We'll see. See you next time!

Patron Saint of Dignity

Chapter Notes

Sorry again for the weird wait. Almost 3 weeks. Nano is going ok, but I thought finishing up this chapter would boost my creative flow. It's nice knowing that *something* got accomplished, you know? I hope you enjoy this, and I hope my plotty decisions don't turn you away :D Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter awoke warm and sated, comfortable and safe with warm afternoon light filtering through the heavy curtains, and so promptly had a small, itchy bitsy freak out. Not his fault, he would swear if asked. It had just been so long since he'd been anywhere his guard could be let down.

“What—?” He bellowed as he leaped forward, low, loud enough to frighten anyone who might be near, and fell face-first onto the floor. Plush and carpeted, with lines of gold woven around strands of the darkest, duskiest of pinks.

A laugh startled him, and he whipped his head around to see Wade (yes, his brain sighed, Wade) sitting in a nearby armchair, laughing uproariously at him. The way Wade was sitting reminded Peter of the stage, of everything being set to create a specific feeling or thought in the viewer's mind. He was alone in the armchair, far away enough that had Peter seen him upon first waking, he would not have been immediately alarmed for his life. He had been sat back in the chair, arms not crossed in front of him or laying on the chair's arms, but resting in his lap. He was trying to look non-threatening.

Or, he had been. He still looked as non-threatening as a strange John could look, but he was laughing at Peter, his cheeks scrunched up, and his shoulders shaking with mirth.

“Hey, you big lout,” Peter called from the floor.

“Yes, my little temptress,” Wade said, trying (and failing) to fight back his laughter.

Peter grimaced at that term, and then smoothed his expression. He *would* be a temptress if that's what Wade wanted. He would be *whatever* Wade wanted. Because Wade was giving him an enormous amount of money, and Peter didn't have any sort of dignity to speak of.

Peter tried to form his mouth into a playful pout, but MJ had always been the actress (and that had been so many years ago), and Peter knew his expression was probably something awkwardly grimace-like.

“Wade,” he said breathily, (did it sound like he was hyperventilating? Or like he had a smoker's gruffness? He couldn't tell) “Why don't you...” he tried to think of something seductive to say, but drew a blank. He'd never been the best at being sexy. Ask anyone he'd ever slept with. He just didn't know what to say. He tried again. “Do you think now is a good time to—” Copulate? No. That sounded too formal. Get jiggy with it? Get it on? Do the sexy time? Oh god, Peter was a mess. An incompetent mess.

“No,” Wade said, smiling, but with finality. “Before anything else, before even the god of gods of

breakfasts, or lunch as it will have to be since you slept away all the morning, or mid-afternoon tea? No, just say it,” he took a deep breath “I wanted to...” he paused, “discuss, what exactly this week would be like.”

Peter shifted onto his side, put a hand on his hip, crossed his legs, and tried to look sexy.

He was lying on the floor because he’d fallen. Wade had seen this happen. He did not look sexy. He knew this.

Wade laughed again, and Peter finally thought to pull himself off the ground.

Just because he’d fallen onto the carpet didn’t mean he had to *stay* on the carpet. He got to his feet feeling just the first stirrings of hunger (he’d eaten so *much* last night), and proceeded to sit, very formally, on the edge of the bed.

“Ok,” Wade said, looking at Peter with what Peter was tempted to classify as a frown but what was probably more of a thinking face. “Ok,” he said again, and then a third time, “Ok.” He exhaled.

He’d never seen Wade this flustered or uncertain, but of course they hadn’t even known each other for 24 hours yet, so that shouldn’t have been a surprise. Peter tried to look expectant. He knew he succeeded because he *felt* expectant. As much as he was willing and able to do the do with this hunk of man for a huge pay out, he wasn’t exactly disappointed that they hadn’t gotten to that part yet. But, he knew that usually in these sorts of situations, the deed would have already been done. Probably many times over. So he *was* expectant, because he knew that something, some reasoning in Wade’s little head, had stopped the sex from happening earlier on, and was stopping him even now, and Peter wanted to know what it was.

This was his Pretty Woman goddamnit, and Wade wasn’t following the script.

(He was aware that this wasn’t Pretty Woman. He was no Julia Roberts, and he wouldn’t be getting a romance out of this, just a lot of money, but that was better wasn’t it?)

Wade let out a long breath, and then he said, “Ok.”

Peter rolled his eyes, tired of being *silently* expectant. “What is it you have to say?” He frowned considering the possibilities. “Do I not appeal to you in the light of day?” He ran his fingers through his greasy hair. If Wade did want to take back their agreement Peter would have to convince him to at least let him shower before he got kicked out on his ass. It wouldn’t be so bad, he told himself, at least he’d had one full night’s sleep. “Or do you not actually have any money? Any millions?” Peter frowned. “You should at least pay for the swanky hotel room.” He looked around a moment and caught sight of his book bag, sitting innocuously and unopened leaning against the leg of a chair by the door. He half rose while saying, “I mean, *I* can’t afford to help chip in if you don’t really have the funds, so I could just leave it that’s—”

Wade let out a huff of breath that could have been labeled as laughter if he didn’t also look supremely nervous. “Please don’t go,” Wade said, “I have the money.”

Peter sat more heavily on the bed, letting his body sink into the plush down comforter and sweetly enveloping mattress beneath. It was comfortable. He could be warm for a week and then be rich. It sounded fake, an illusion he didn’t want to escape, and so he let himself believe and not-believe at the same time and just accepted it.

Except for the nervous look on Wade’s face.

“You know,” Peter said, “it’s not usually the hooker’s job to convince the trick to get jiggy with it.

We're going about this all backwards."

"Don't I know it," Wade complained, his shoulders sagging minutely. "I've already had three pretty young things like you walk out on me after I give them the whole itinerary."

Peter's eyes narrowed. "So you've tried this before? Whatever *this* is?" It sounded suspicious. It sounded very suspicious. But Peter's Spidey-sense was still a low comforting hum that usually meant nothing was wrong.

"Yes. Well, no, not quite. I started off offering a lot less. Half a mil. And they were hard up. Not to judge, but I've talked to some sweet little things, where the "little" was because they were obviously seriously malnourished and/or addicted to serious druggos. They coulda used half a mil."

I could use half a mil, Peter thought to himself. And then did not say because a full mil was a lot better than half a mil, and Peter had morals, but he wasn't going to talk down his... buyer? Sure. His buyer. Wade was his buyer. Why not? That was a title that definitely didn't make it sound like Peter was top class heroin. But, it wasn't exactly inaccurate. And Peter wasn't going to talk his 'buyer' out of giving him all that money (not that Peter was one hundred percent he would ever actually get any of that money). Or more accurately, into giving him half of that. Peter could be dumb, but he wasn't a complete idiot.

"And yet they walked away," Peter said to the stiffer-than-a-plank-of-wood Wade sitting sternly in his armchair. "Why?"

Wade let out a long breath, but his shoulders didn't sag or bend. He stayed straight as a board, his shoulders thrown back and his head held high. He was about to say something painful. Or, no, not painful. Something...serious. He was about to reveal a lie he'd told. One he thought he shouldn't feel guilty about feeling, but one he might possibly did feel guilty for.

Peter was a goddamned detective. Suck on *that*, Columbo.

"I haven't exactly been truthful," Wade said, speaking quickly, to get it all out, or to sound confident. Or both.

"I don't really expect prostitute-hire-ers to be the pinnacle of truth," Peter admitted, with only a small frown on his face. Peter liked to think it made him look serious. Aunt May had always—he'd always been told that it made him look grumpy, instead.

Wade rolled his eyes and quirked his lips. "Ha ha. Would you like me to explain? Or—"

"No, go on."

Wade rolled his eyes again, but still didn't let himself slouch. Peter frowned harder. "So, you might have noticed that a million dollars is a lot of money, even paying for a week of your time."

Peter nodded. "We did have a conversation skirting that exact topic. Continue."

"Right, so it might come as a surprise that I don't actually need you to do sex to me at all. For the whole week."

Peter snorted. "Do sex to me. What are you, a five-year-old?" And then the rest of Wade's sentence caught up to him. "Wait, you hired a prostitute for a week to *not* have sex with you?" And then his suspicion caught up with him and he narrowed his eyes. Peter thought, if he had to, he could bring Wade down and run away without compromising his identity. His strength was up thanks to last night (this morning's) meal. He could defend himself if Wade's explanation got as

weird as it was promising to be. “What do you need me for then?”

“You don’t have to do it,” Wade said and bit his lip. “I’m not going to force you to stay. And you can keep the money I gave you last night as payment for last night even if you leave early. I’m not going to make you do anything you don’t want to do.”

“I know,” Peter ground out. “Now explain.”

He seemed nice still, but Peter was well aware that villains often seemed nice. (And a corner of Peter’s mind was starting to worry, because Wade was seeming more and more suspicious the more he spoke, but Peter’s spider sense was still a comforting low-level buzz. Nothing to worry about, his subconscious seemed to say, despite what his ears were hearing. Was there something wrong with him? Had the hunger, the starving, the night after night of sleepless worrying damaged him somehow? Damaged his mind? He shoved that thought away and set his mind on concentrating on Wade and the possible danger he presented.) Could Wade be a trafficker? Or a drug dealer? Someone Peter was going to have to deal with? What could he possibly be asking hookers to do that they were turning down? Maybe he wanted them to be drug mules? Or wanted to send them off to be prostitutes or escorts in a different country? Or assassins? Or the cover for assassins? Something to do with smuggling? The possibilities kept flashing across his mind, and none of them sounded good.

“I just need to look married for a night.”

Peter blinked. That was not what he was expecting to hear.

“Married?” Peter asked. He looked down at himself. Very male, and kind of gross-looking still (the shower, the shower, his mind hummed at him). “You chose a male prostitute to play house with? Why?”

“Why the guy thing? I mean, I’m not particular to the genitalia of my partner. I mean, I take care of it all the same, if you know what I mean,” he air humped once, twice, before realizing he was still trying to be persuasive and air-humping did not give an air of business-like acumen. “But I’m equally up for a role in the hay with a boy or a girl or anyone in-between, or out-of-the-box, or nothing at all.” He shrugged. “Of course, my previous three tries were all of the female persuasion, mostly because as much as I don’t care if my partner marks an “F” or an “M” on their paperwork, or a “Nun yo bizness,” the place I’ll be taking you to is probably at least half-full of homophobes, so an “F” would be less suspicious.”

“Suspicious?” Peter asked, his pitch slightly higher. Wade didn’t seem to notice he’d spoken.

“But then I figured, they would never believe someone party crashing and trying to stay on the down-low would draw attention to themselves that way, so if I were to bring a guy as my plus one, it would make me even less suspicious.”

“See,” Peter said, “that sounds like either a cock-and-bull story designed to make me give in so you can chloroform me and sell my organs on the black market—”

“Hey!” Wade said, offended.

“—or, you’re being serious, and you want an untrained prostitute to help you gate-crash a...party? That I assume is full of dangerous individuals, which could also get me killed. No wonder everyone else dropped you like last year’s Reader’s digest.”

“You wouldn’t get hurt,” Wade said with conviction, a bite to his words. Peter believed him. “I

will protect you with my life,” Wade continued, and then seemed to rein himself in. “Not that you’d be in danger. We won’t get caught. Just a little recon mission. Nothing to sneeze at.”

Peter wasn’t so convinced. “Who are you anyway that you’d be mixed up in anything that *needed* a recon mission. Who even calls party-crashing a “mission?” I think you have a lot more explaining to do.”

Wade arched an eyebrow and threw his shoulders back. “I plan on paying you a million dollars for what is going to be, for you, a pretty easy week. All you have to do is sit back and relax, eat some food, let me buy you a tux, and on Friday come with me to a party where you just have to look pretty and act dumb. Saturday morning you’ll be free to walk away and blow your kahunas on unlimited tacos at Del Taco and a Hulu subscription. Or you can ask me super dangerous questions about criminals, freak yourself out, blow my cover and get us both killed.”

Peter arched an unimpressed eyebrow. (He was a mirror version of Wade, he realized: arched eyebrows, shoulders thrown back, arms crossed. He self-consciously let his arms fall to his side and slouched.) “What would you do if I *did* walk out? This “recon mission”” he made air quotes and said the words in a way that made it very obvious how little he believed anything Wade said, “if it really *is* a recon mission, is happening on Friday you said. It’s Tuesday, unless my days have forgotten me. You’re kind of running out of time.”

“Thus paying you a million buckerinos for a week with me. And the week is only really five days. You’re getting a deal; please don’t leave me to find *another* wholesome and innocent-looking hooker. It seems like *no* one in this town is willing to escort a strange and unattractive man to a suspicious Gala for an excessive amount of money.”

You would probably have more luck and look less suspicious if you were only dolling out a tenth of that million, Peter thought but did not say. He wanted the money. He was not ashamed of it.

“When you say it like that, it does sound completely ridiculous,” Peter pointed out.

Wade contemplated that for a moment and then shrugged.

“It’s not wrong, though.” He sighed, deep and unconsciously heartfelt. With genuine exhaustion, the kind brought on by worry and stress and nights staying up strategizing the future and past, he wiped a hand down his face.

Peter knew exactly how that felt, and found himself sympathizing despite the continued lack of actual explanation Wade was providing him with. And, and Peter didn’t know why he felt this way, but he did trust Wade. Really, inexplicably trust this stranger who talked with quips and hired a prostitute with too much money to spend five days together not having sex. He seemed like an alright guy, and honestly it was sort of a relief to not have to throw sex at a stranger to afford to live. He *would* have, don’t get him wrong, but he didn’t regret *not* having to. And, honestly, honestly, honestly, he really could do with the money. And his Spidey-sense still hadn’t piped up, even when Wade was talking about recon missions and espionage and death. Peter found himself talking before his brain had fully decided, but once the words were out of his mouth, he found that they were the truth.

“I’ll stay,” Peter said. “I’ll help you take down the invisible threat of evil at this fun party thing or whatever.”

“You will not be taking down *any* evil,” Wade said askance. “I am giving you enough money to give me an alibi, not to help me take down an evil corporation hell-bent on world destruction.”

Peter blanched. “*What* organization?”

Wade shook his head. “The less you know the better.”

Peter pursed his lips. “I should know what I’m getting into.”

“I’m not budging on this,” Wade said with a stern expression. “No offense, but your life up till now hasn’t actually equipped you to be dealing with *any* evil corporations, especially not this one.”

“Which is...?” Peter asked hopefully.

“Nuh-uh. No way. I’m trying to keep you safe and innocent here.”

“I’m hooker,” Peter said, lying-ly, “I’m not exactly innocent.”

Wade knocked away that reasoning with a wave of his hand. “There’s sleeping with people for money, and there’s world destruction and evil scientists. Slightly different.”

Peter... could not argue with this. Wade was wrong of course, but proving it would include some identity revealing, and Peter wanted his Spidey life far, far away from anything having to do with being a prostitute. No overlap, thank you very much. And the more Wade talked, the more Peter believed that something hanky *was* going down at this party/gala/whatever thing. The more Wade talked, the more Peter trusted him. Which might be dangerous, but Peter’s life had never exactly been danger-free.

“Are you trying to convince me to *not* help you?” Peter asked with some consternation.

“No, no!” Wade spat out quickly. He got to his feet, hands outstretched imploringly. “No, I really need to look like a happily married, not at all suspicious, do-not-research-me man. You’re perfect. Please stay. Money.”

“As opposed to a slightly disturbed single man crashing a gala put on by an undisclosed evil organization trying to take over the world?”

“Destroy the world,” Wade corrected.

“Right,” Peter said, “destroy the world.”

“Yes,” Wade said. “You have to admit, married gay man is a lot less suspicious than socially inept alone-man.”

Peter could understand that logic.

“And you’ll do it?” Wade asked, his voice carefully devoid of hope, as if he wasn’t really sure he was getting his wish.

Peter nodded. At the very least, even if they did get killed, he’d get to sleep in this swanky hotel room, and get fed, for four days and nights before it happened. It wasn’t like he’d be able to survive much longer on the streets with the way things were going. And maybe (probably, he hoped) Wade was telling the truth and they might live and take down a shadowy organization, etc. etc. He had nothing to lose.

“I’ll do it,” Peter agreed, and Wade gave a wide, relieved, smile, that looked just a little hazy around the edges in light of day. “But only if I get to use the very dapper hotel bathroom to take a very dapper shower. Right now.”

“Deal.”

Chapter End Notes

And the plot takes a huge turn to the left ;)

Patron Saint of Tailors

Chapter Notes

It's December, guys, you know what that means?! Break! Looking forward to getting some days off, relaxing, and pretending everything is easy and that I have the money to buy people gifts. The next chapter, if I plan things correctly, should come out right before Christmas. Hopefully.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy the chapter! Happy December everybody!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I didn’t think you were serious,” Peter whined, arms outstretched and feeling a fool as a serious man with a graying mustache measured his in-seam. He felt awkward. Usually when someone was this close to his junk they were both naked and for the most part, not sober. Also, not in their 60s.

“I’m gate-crashing a gala, not a high school bonfire,” Wade said. “I need my husband to look fine as fuck in a bomb-ass tux.”

It took a second for Peter to realize that Wade meant him when he said husband. He knew it was fake, obviously, but Peter was barely an adult (mentally if not physically) and he really couldn’t even imagine ever getting married, but especially not this young. “Husband,” was not a term he’d ever thought would be called. It almost made him jerk reflexively, but there was a man by his groin so that would have been supes awkward, and also he really needed to get used to Wade calling him that (and other endearments, like Darling, Sweetie, Babe, you sexy thang, etc) so it would look natural at the party—ahem, Gala, on Friday.

He had a long way to go.

“What about you?” Peter asked. “Don’t you want to look dashing and debonair?”

Wade puffed out his chest. “I’ve already got a tux, thank you very much. Of course it isn’t going to be as glitzy glam as you’ll be, dahhhling, but it makes my butt look good, so…” he shrugged.

“Glitzy glam?” Peter asked, making a face.

“You’re a trophy husband, Petey. You’re here to make me, your wonderful husband, look rich and full of myself. You gotta look hot because you gotta look like someone hard to afford, but that *I* can afford. Something for me to flaunt.” He popped a hip and blew a kiss.

Peter rolled his eyes and jerked backwards when the kneeling man before him stood. He caught himself before he did something like backhand the man across the room, or jump onto the ceiling. The man, unaware of how close his life came to getting a whole lot more interesting (or a whole lot more stuck in a wall), took Peter’s arm and outstretched it so he could measure the length.

“What does this trophy husband glitzy glam tux entail?” Peter asked. He looked up into the impersonal eye of the tailor. “No glitter,” Peter told the man. “No sparkles, no holographic sequins. Please, for my sanity.”

The man looked offended. “Never, Sir,” the man said, sounding aghast.

“That’s right,” Wade said, “nothing but the fanciest of velour tracksuits for my beloved.”

The tailor cleared his throat and tried to unruffle himself, but he looked a little wild around the eyes.

“Don’t worry,” Peter told the man in a low, confidential tone. “I’ll kill him before I let velour touch my unsullied skin.”

Wade broke out laughing, doubled over and clutching at his stomach.

Peter sniffed posh-like. “What are you laughing about, wise-guy? Have something against me calling my skin unsullied?” Peter didn’t think Wade would be the kind of person to think himself better than sex workers, what with his plan to hire someone of that profession to... well, not *sleep* together, but, spend time together anyway. However, Peter knew some prejudices ran deeper than people thought, and he wasn’t about to risk it, and let this trick laugh at Peter’s profession (no, he hadn’t actually had sex for money, but he had been ready and willing to [and still was] so the point stood) or make some remark about how Peter’s skin was the opposite of unsullied.

Instead what Wade said was, “No, I’m laughing that you think the soft sweetness of velour would somehow ruin you.”

Peter made a face. “It’s *velour*. It’s disgusting and should have been killed in infancy.”

Wade gasped dramatically. “How *dare* you! Velour tracksuits are the only good thing that came from the 90s!”

“You take that back!” Peter snapped. “Britney, bandanas, crop tops? All wonderful things the 90s gifted us with. Velour tracksuits? Garbage. Absolute garbage.”

“I want a divorce,” Wade said, but he had a smile playing around the edges of his lips.

“And I want half of your money in the fall out, so that works for me,” Peter said.

“No, baby, come back!” Wade whined, dropping to his knees. “You can blame it all on me!”

Peter scoffed. “You and your 90s lies.” He shook himself, and automatically bent backwards, away from the older gentleman when the man leaned closer to wrap the tape measure around Peter’s arm, but a small cough from Wade stilled him. “So not velour,” Peter said, trying to pick back up the conversation, “and nothing that glitters.”

“Shine bright like a diamond,” Wade sang out only slightly off-key.

“So what does that leave? I mean, I would be A-ok with a simple, classic, all black ensemble—”

“Who are you even trying to fool?” Wade asked. “No one who knows me would believe for even a second that anyone I was dating would be caught dead wearing anything less than something perfectly outlandish. All black my ass.”

Peter narrowed his eyes. “And this... gala. It’s going to be full of people who know who you are? And the type of hus—husband,” he stuttered over the word and then growled self-reproachfully, “you would have? How—what am I supposed to be?”

“You’re supposed to be my husband, obviously.”

Peter rolled his eyes. “No, I mean, what kind of person? Who is the Peter who would marry you?

What are your romantic partners usually like? Who do I need to be?"

Wade actually paused to think about it, which allowed Peter for the first time to really get a look at Wade while he was standing still. Peter was starting to think that maybe his days of delirium brought on by malnutrition and depression had seriously screwed up his brain. Even after a full night's sleep and *two* fantasmic meals Wade was still looking a little fuzzy around the edges, and not a hint of danger came from his Spidey-sense. Which was. Just. Obvious bullshit. Wade was nice, sure, but, like, he hired prostitutes to pose as his S.O. for espionage reasons? Some danger bells should be going off in Peter's head. But there was nothing. And Peter couldn't even begin to explain his inability to focus Wade's face completely.

"You, I think," Wade said finally, and Peter had to concentrate to remember what they had been talking about. "Anyone I date is always unabashedly themselves. I don't think you need to pretend to be anyone else. Just be you, and also devoted to me."

Peter sighed. "That's not nearly as helpful as you think it is."

"Why?" Wade asked, smiling slyly, "Don't you usually act yourself when attending a possibly dangerous gala with your rich husband?"

"Definitely not," Peter said, "that's the opposite of when you act yourself."

Wade scoffed. "Obviously you and I have been attending very different galas."

"Finished," said the papery voice of the elderly tailor, and Peter jerked again, having forgotten for a moment they weren't alone.

"No velour," Peter reminded the man, looking him in the eye to make sure the man knew he meant business.

"Or sparkles, or glitter," the man agreed with a slight smile. Peter nodded his head decisively; they had an accord.

"You ruin my fun," Wade complained.

Peter kept his eyes trained on the tailor, and neither of their expressions waivered.

Wade sighed. "Fine," he said, and held his hand out for Peter to take. Peter placed his hand cautiously in Wade's and stepped off the platform.

"The suit will be delivered by Friday morning," the older man said with deep seriousness.

Peter looked between Wade and the man. "Don't I get to know what I'll be wearing?"

Wade winked at him. "I just want to have one surprise for my dearest darling. I want to see your face."

Peter worried seriously that he was going to be seen in public wearing a bedazzled suit. He shuddered.

"Now don't worry your little head," Wade said, "it'll be something respectably outrageous, I promise."

Peter harrumphed. Wade transferred Peter's hand to the crook of his elbow, and led him from the room. The tailor's shop let out onto a street just a few blocks from the hotel, which, in light of day,

looked even fancier and glitzier than Peter remembered it looking at fuck o'clock in the morning. They'd left the hotel by foot to get to the tailor's shop (a small hole-in-the-wall that Peter would never have expected to house such expensive clothing), so he automatically turned to walk back the way they'd come, but ended up stumbling when instead of walking down the crowded sidewalk, Wade stepped up to the road and raised a hand. A taxi pulled up and Wade hustled Peter into the backseat.

"More shopping?" Peter asked, trying to mask the dread in his voice. "It's getting dark. Wouldn't you rather never ever enter another store again?"

Wade laughed at Peter's obvious pain. "Not quite," and then he gave the cabbie an address in Bushwick.

"What then?" Peter asked. "I thought I'd finished with my—" the pause was so small it was barely noticeable, "husbandly duties for the day."

"Didn't anyone teach you? Being a husband isn't a job, it's a lifestyle."

Peter pressed his lips together to keep from laughing. "I know you're trying to be funny, hubby, but that wasn't even a joke. That was just, yes."

"Just yes?" Wade asked with amused incredulity.

Peter rolled his eyes. "You know what I mean."

"Yes I do," Wade said, "and I also know that it's been a long time since breakfast/lunch and I'm starving."

Peter relaxed a little back into the seat. "Food. I can live with food."

Wade rolled his eyes. "Yes, that is generally the use of food. Besides tasting good."

"Hardy har har," Peter said dryly. "I hope you step on a tack."

Wade grinned at him guilelessly.

"Fine," Peter said, "be that way. *Don't* step on a tack. See if I care."

"You're very finicky, husband o' mine."

Peter frowned, worried suddenly that he was doing this wrong. Was that a warning from the man that Peter wasn't acting his part correctly? He'd said that Peter should just be himself, but Peter being himself and Peter being husband material were very different things. He and Wade had hit it off, they clicked, and talking to him sometimes, even though they'd barely known each other 12 hours, was easier than breathing. It was easy to forget that they weren't friends, not really, and that he was here for a reason. He tried to straighten up in his seat, raise his chin, look...something. Dashing? Worth-it? Peter didn't know, just, not himself.

"None of that," Wade said immediately, sounding abruptly serious. He bumped Peter's shoulder with his own. "I was just joshing you, Pete. Don't get all stiff and weird on me now. I thought we had a nice thing going."

Peter raised his eyebrows, but let his shoulders slump a little back into something semi-relaxed. "A nice thing going?" he repeated.

Wade nodded, and then leaned close, opening his eyes wide and beguiling. “We’re meant to be, Pete. True love and all that.”

Peter slapped Wade on the back of his head, and Wade collapsed lower down in the seat, laughing.

“You guys married or somethin’?” the cabbie asked, his strong Brooklyn accent at odds with how soft his tone was.

Peter and Wade exchanged a glance.

“Something like that,” Wade finally said. “Or close enough to being.”

“Well good for you,” the cabbie said, nodding to emphasize his conviction. “Not enough people willing to tie the knot these days. It’s a good institution,” he laughed here, “if you choose the right person.”

“I’m sure I’ve chosen right,” Wade said and winked at Peter.

“Well good,” the man said, and then pulled up to a curb, “and we’re here. That’ll be fifty-two sixty-nine.”

Peter gagged at the price. Jesus. They could have taken the metro! But Wade didn’t seem worried, or even like he noticed the price. He pulled a wallet from his back pocket, threw four twenties over the front seat, and said, “Keep the change!”

Peter gaped at him, and kept gaping at him as they exited the taxi. He didn’t stop gaping at Wade until he almost tripped on a crack in the sidewalk. Then he had a chance to look around and frowned.

“Industrial Brooklyn?” Peter asked. “This is where we’re going to eat? There’s nothing here but grey concrete walls and crumbling cement!”

“So quick to judge,” Wade chided. “Ye of little faith.”

Peter crossed his arms. He was still wearing the same jeans and t-shirt he’d been wearing for, it seemed, forever. At the tailor’s and in the hotel, he’d felt self-conscious. Here, at least, amongst the drab walls, corrugated metal, and fading graffiti, he seemed to fit in. He too was drab and fading.

“I will continue to judge,” Peter admitted, “because this looks like a warehouse district and I’m not digging it. What are we going to do? Eat rats?”

“You *are* snippy,” Wade said, sounding genuinely surprised. Then his eyes narrowed and his lips quirked up at one side. “Are you hangry?”

Peter rolled his eyes, but had to admit that that was probably part of it. It had been a long time since he’d eaten, and, yes, he was getting more meals than he had before (by a long shot), but he was still way below what was healthy, especially with his enhanced metabolism. But he wasn’t going to *admit* it.

“Shush, you,” Peter said.

“Feed your hunger,” Wade said, sounding very commercial spokesman-y.

Peter rolled his eyes. “I would, but you promised me a *restaurant*,” Peter complained, “and all I see are—” he gestured around him, at a loss for description. “Nothing? Death?” Peter spread his arms

out. “Wade, we’re going to die here. We’re going to get stabbed and mugged and murdered in *Bushwick*.”

Wade laughed. “It’s not that bad. Look, we’re here.” He stopped in front of what, admittedly, did look like a shop. Like, a hodunk one, with purposeful graffiti and fading paint, but at least it didn’t look like a warehouse. It even had a name sign above the door and everything, not that Peter could read it.

“I’m not impressed,” Peter said dryly.

“That’s because you haven’t opened the door.”

Peter looked down at the rusting doorknob. “Am I going to get tetanus?”

“You’re going to get a fist to the teeth if you don’t lighten up on the cynicism.”

“You should know me better than that, ‘O husband mine. I’m *all* cynicism.”

“You’re just hangry,” Wade said dismissively, and reached past Peter to push the door open.

Peter was— “Wow,” Peter said. “This place is—Wow!”

Wade laughed and pushed at Peter’s shoulders until he’d gotten him across the threshold. Peter stumbled a little, too preoccupied by the décor to pay attention to his feet. It was— “Wow,” Peter said again.

“Stop that,” Wade said, smiling, “grab a seat.”

Wade led Peter to a booth, and Peter had time to really look at the rainbow explosion that was the inside of the restaurant. First of all, the building was a lot bigger than it looked like on the outside, and the tall ceilings of what had once been corrugated metal had been painted a rictus of neon colors, neon yellows and greens reached up to meet electric blues. Magenta curtains hung from the ceiling with gold coins strung across points in the ceiling that gave a glittering haphazard feel to the place. There were squares of artificial grass glued to the walls making checker patterns next to vibrant reds and oranges. Even the chairs and metal stools were a mish mash of every color under the rainbow. Only the tables were lacking in the bright rainbow that suffused the room. They were metal, reflective but not shiny. Like someone had taken sandpaper to a fridge door. Yeah, it still looked like a hole in the wall, but it looked magical too.

“I want to live here,” Peter breathed.

“That’ll lessen up eventually,” Wade said calmly. “You’ll get used to it and see how gaudy it is, and realize this is not someplace you come to relax.”

“Who needs to relax?” Peter said, still feeling a little blindsided by how extraordinary the restaurant looked, especially compared to the outside.

Wade gave Peter a fondly exasperated look and pulled two menus from a rack on the table. He gave one to Peter and opened other. Peter looked down at the cheap laminate.

“Vietnamese?” He asked, surprised.

“Don’t judge. Stop judging,” Wade whined. “Choose your food, I know what I want and I’m not waiting for you to order. And it looks like the waiter just spotted us, so....”

Peter glanced over to see a man who looked about Peter's age, so maybe a boy, heading over to them. Peter looked down at the menu. He looked at the boy again. He looked at the menu.

"I was joking," Wade said, "I mean, kind of. I'll order if you're not ready, because I'm starving, but that doesn't mean you can't order the next time he comes 'round."

"No," Peter said, "I got it."

"You must read fast then," Wade said. "You smart? Book smart?"

Peter shrugged.

Wade narrowed his eyes. "So that's a yes then. What are you doing playing nightwalker when you could be going to school. Unless you're playing nightwalker *while* you go to school. Did I rip you out of *school*?"

Peter laughed. "No. I..." He didn't particularly want to explain the painful process of getting in to, and attending, the school of his dreams, but not being able to stay because he just didn't have enough. Enough anything. Money, commitment, luck. "I'm smart, but I'm poor."

Wade tilted his head to the side. "Aren't there, like, scholarships and shit?"

Peter shrugged. "They didn't cover everything, and there wasn't enough time in a day to work enough to pay what scholarships couldn't and still..." He couldn't say Aunt May's name. "I can't afford *clothes* let alone school supplies or tuition."

Wade looked at the shirt Peter was wearing.

"Yeah, I was going to—" but then the waiter walked up. Wade ordered something that Peter couldn't even begin imagining how to pronounce, and Peter decided to stick with what he knew and order Pho. When the waiter left, Wade looked at Peter again. "I was going to ask if you had anything else to wear, but I thought it might be offensive. Is that the only shirt you own?"

Peter shrugged. "I have a hoodie I could throw on top for variety."

"That backpack..." Wade started.

"Holds all my worldly possessions, dude. I sacrificed clothes space for a photo album and my birth certificate."

Wade frowned. "I'm taking you shopping," Wade said, "and then we're burning that." He pointed to Peter's shirt, which was, admittedly, dingy. But Peter didn't have much left in the world.

"I'll wash it, thank you very much, and keep it."

"Uh-huh," Wade said.

"And didn't you take me shopping this afternoon?" Peter asked. "You don't need to buy me anything else."

"I'm paying for dinner," Wade pointed out. "And a tux isn't going to be comfy to lounge around in, Mr. Scruffy. I'm getting you comfort clothes."

"You really don't need to buy—"

"Is it the money thing that bothers you?" Wade asked. "Because I could deduct from the *million*

dollars that I'm—"

"I get it!" Peter said, raising his hands in surrender.

"Hah," Wade laughed, arms crossed, and leaned back in his booth, his blond hair whipping around his head and looking right at home against the bright walls behind him. "I win."

"You're a child," Peter told the man.

"Don't I know it," Wade said. He put his elbows on the table in order to rest his head in his hands, and then promptly moved them when the waiter returned with water.

The food came soon after, and a friendly silence descended while they both inhaled their dinner. After Wade paid the check and they were on their way out, Peter spoke up. He had a hard time keeping his eyes open, and a large yawn expanded out of him.

"Hey, Wade?" Peter asked.

"Yeah, Baby boy?" Wade responded.

"Think we could hold off on another outing until tomorrow? I'm dead tired."

Wade looked closer at Peter's face, and then put an arm around his shoulders. "You look beat. Of course we can wait until tomorrow. I'll call us a taxi."

Peter groaned. "Another? It was *so expensive*."

Wade laughed, and without answering fished his phone out of his pocket and rang up a taxi company. The way back to the hotel was slow, and Peter was tired enough (sleep debt was a bitch) that he dozed off a few times. Up in the suite, Wade let Peter have the big bed again. Peter was just awake enough to wonder if Peter was depriving Wade of a bed, but then figured that there were three other rooms in the suite, and if the man wanted this bed specifically, he could have said something, since he was paying for the suite. And with that thought still finishing, he drifted off.

Chapter End Notes

In case anyone was wondering, I did the NaNoWriMo, wrote the full 50k words. It was. Oh my god. How does anybody do it? I mean, I just, there is not enough time in a day, I swear. If I didn't have those days in the middle to catch up. Thank you Thanksgiving break, you saved my life.
Anybody out there who finished NaNoWriMo, even if you didn't reach that ridiculous word count, congrats. You wrote! Time to Celebrate! :D

Patron Saint of Heroes

Chapter Notes

Dolla Dolla bill ya'll, or as is more formally said, Happy Holidays! I hope everyone is enjoying their government-mandated time off! This chapter is my present to you :D
Enjoy!

Peter woke up to silence in the hotel room. It was barely light out, just dawn, and only a hint of early blue light trickled through the curtains. Peter must have slept forever (thank you, sleep debt), but now he was wide awake, and it was a little too early for him to go anywhere or do anything. He sat for a moment in his ratty jeans and t-shirt, feeling his skin itch against the soft comforter, not moving, and not thinking. For a moment he just was. He existed just to exist, not to worry or cry or laugh or think. He was just there. Being. He breathed in, deeply, through his nose.

And then he swung his feet off the bed and padded to the door. The living room was as dark and quiet as Peter's bedroom had been, and Peter looked around for a moment, peering through blue shadows, hoping to see hide or hair of Wade, but he wasn't around. He must still be asleep.

Peter looked at the three doors that led to the other bedrooms and wondered for a moment if he should look through them, see which one, if any, Wade was in.

At the last moment he decided not to. Wade had given him privacy when he didn't have to, and Peter would extend the same to him. He'd ask Wade, when the man woke up, which room he was in, and when he usually awoke, but for now Peter could wait.

He meandered over to the kitchen and began pulling open cabinets to see what Wade had stocked for them. Peter wasn't quite hungry yet, though he had the feeling in his stomach that when he did get hungry he would skip straight to starving. There wasn't much in the cupboards besides a half-eaten and zip-tie-closed bag of Takis, and a few loose granny smith apples. The fridge had some leftover quesadillas in Styrofoam containers and a jar of salsa, and the freezer had a bag of frozen strawberries and a bigger bag of tater tots. Not exactly the fixings of a balanced meal, but mmmmm, tater tots.

Peter decided to hold off on eating until Wade was awake. No use in doing two sets of dishes. Or in eating the man's food without permission.

Instead he headed to the bathroom, finding a mission in taking a long, relaxing shower. He'd taken one before getting fitted out for the tux the day before, and he didn't really *need* another. He hadn't gotten dirty just standing in front of a man with a tape measure, or in eating pho, but there was no way he wasn't going to take advantage of a fully stocked bathroom when it was delivered to him on a golden platter. He stripped in front of the sink, turning his eye away from his reflection in the mirror (he didn't want to see how his skin hugged each individual rib, or the dip in his stomach below his ribcage, or the sharp outline of his collarbones. He didn't want to see too closely how thin his face had gotten, how shaggy his hair, how knobby his elbows), and then stepped into the shower before it fully heated up. He just stood for a moment, relishing in the beating of the water against his head, the thudding of droplets hitting his flesh. He stood under the spray and breathed and breathed and did not think of Aunt May or MJ, Gwen or Harry, he did not think about how long it had been since he'd donned his suit (too long, but he'd tried fighting at first even while being

homeless and woke up still dizzy from where he'd fallen when his strength failed him), or when the last time it was that he'd felt really comfortable.

That not-thought brought him up short, though, because he *had* felt comfortable recently. He felt comfortable right now. He had felt comfortable sleeping in the plush bed, and sitting across from Wade in a sketch part of town in a rainbow of a restaurant, and stripping naked in the same hotel suite as a man he'd met two nights ago, leaving himself bare and vulnerable. He wasn't—he was happy. He was missing a lot, down on his luck, sad and alone, but not that sad, not that alone, and it was nice to have a friend again, even if the friendship was flimsy and based on monetary gain and misunderstandings. He wasn't ecstatic or overjoyed or loving every minute of his life, but he was simply happy, comfortable.

After twenty minutes of letting the warm water beat any stress from his shoulders, and just relishing in being able to *take* a shower, Peter did a quick scrub down with a bar of soap that smelled of lemongrass, and shampooed and conditioned his hair with whatever was in the tiny bottles hotels always provide, and stepped out of the shower after turning off the water.

There were...clothes? His clothes were missing, from where he'd left them on the floor in a crumpled heap, but on the closed lid of the toilet were squares of cloth Peter knew would be replacement clothes. Unless Wade wanted Peter to run around town in a pillow case. Peter picked up the first article, which was a simple black t-shirt with a stylized picture of a swallow carrying a coconut. He laughed, a little, put at ease, and picked up the next square, which unfolded into a pair of olive-colored cargo shorts. Beneath it, with the tag still on it, was a pair of boxers. Peter bit his lip to keep from laughing at the familiar pattern decorating the boxers. They were covered in polka dots made entirely of Captain America's iconic shield. Wade was a fan, obviously. For a moment Peter wondered how he hadn't noticed Wade enter the bathroom, his Spidey sense usually at least let him know when someone intruded in his personal space, but he figured, with how zoned-out he'd been he was allowed to miss a probably trustworthy person delivering him fresh clothes.

Peter dressed himself in the new clothes, and felt almost like a real person when he looked in the mirror, fully clothed, and saw no dirt or grime or grease on his person. The pants hung a little low, and the t-shirt was loose, but the boxers fit and the rest Peter could deal with.

He stepped through the doorway and out into the living room to find Wade lounging on the couch with his legs up, fiddling with his phone.

"Boots off the cushion," Peter couldn't help but nag. Aunt May had had a very strict policy concerning footwear on her furniture, and it had become an ingrained habit for Peter.

Wade looked up and grinned. He was dressed casually as well, in rough work jeans and a hoodie with the zipper pulled up. It took a moment for Peter to notice that the color scheme and design of the hoodie was frankly a Spiderman rip-off. His heart picked up pace. Was it possible that Wade had figured it out? And that this was his way of playing with Peter's mind? Had Peter said anything? Or had Wade rifled through his backpack while he was asleep?

Peter glanced over to his room's door. He'd hidden his backpack beneath the wardrobe. Wade had maybe discovered it, but Peter hadn't noticed anything had changed.

Wade seemed oblivious to Peter's internal dilemma, and compliantly swung his feet off the couch. He gave Peter an appraising look. "Little too big, but not horrible. They're at least good enough to get us to a store and back, get you something that won't hang off your frame like clothes on a line."

Peter picked at the hem of his shirt. "They yours?" he asked.

Wade nodded and swept at the corner at the drawstring of his hoodie, bringing into focus again the design. Peter gulped.

“Yeah,” Wade said simply. “I thought you wouldn’t mind borrowing since it’ll only be for a few hours. They look chic, right?”

Peter looked down at his shirt.

“You’re a nerd,” Peter said, almost accusingly.

Wade shrugged and plucked at the shoulders of his hoodie. “You surprised? I’m a fan of funny. And Monty Python is always good for a laugh. As is this guy.”

Peter swallowed again. “Spiderman, right?” Peter said, playing for ignorance. Maybe this was all just a coincidence. And if it was, Peter wasn’t going to dig himself a hole before Wade said he knew anything.

Wade gasped dramatically. “Are you saying you don’t know the light and beauty of that fine booty? Spidey, is *God*, Petey-boy. *God*!”

Peter laughed, with only the smallest hint of strain.

“I suppose you’re a big fan of Supers, then, considering the boxers.”

Wade’s face lit up. “You liked them, then? Captain America’s the best! Besides Spidey of course. Gotta stay true to the web-slinger in my heart.”

Probably all a coincidence then. “Yeah,” Peter shrugged, “I like them.” He’d grown up with a fondness for Captain America. Uncle Ben had a hoard of old Captain America comics in a box that Peter had read through time and time again, but as for modern supers, Peter honestly had a better camaraderie with Iron Man or the Human Torch. But that was a side thought, because Peter still wasn’t *positive* that Wade didn’t know he was Spiderman. How could this much of a coincidence happen? “What do you like about Spiderman?” Peter asked, trying to stay unattached-sounding. This was an offhand question. Nothing that would draw any attention to himself.

Wade sighed almost adoringly. “Besides the tush, you mean?” Wade asked. And then he straightened a little, lost a shade of his frivolity. “He’s a hero. He doesn’t have the same back-up the Avengers do, or the Fantastic Four, or even the X-men. He’s a lone wolf. A single shining star. And yet...” his eyes lit up, he leaned forward, his expression grew passionate. He looked alive. “And yet,” he repeated with awe, “he doesn’t break. He stands true to his morals. He doesn’t maim or unal—kill. He—he...” he sighed dreamily. “He’s someone to live up to, you know? If he can do it, if he can *keep* doing it, year after year, not killing for revenge, but saving lives out of just—the good of his heart! That. That is what I want to do.”

Peter and Wade were both silent for a moment. Peter, staring at Wade with a searching gaze; Wade staring off into the distance, stars in his eyes.

No, Peter decided. If Wade knew who Peter was, who he *really* was, there was no way he wouldn’t have done...something about it. Peter wasn’t sure if this was hero worship or not (he didn’t feel comfortable with hero worship, and despite knowing that what Wade said was technically true, the whole no-killing policy, Peter didn’t think it was something to be admired. It was common decency, nothing more) but Wade wouldn’t have just pretended he knew nothing. From what Peter knew of the man, he knew that wasn’t his style. And he felt a little flattered. Just a little. A tiny warming of the heart that Wade had already taken from the freezer and thawed.

Maybe Peter was getting maudlin in his old age.

“Is that why you’re gate-crashing a danger-Gala?” Peter asked, curious.

Wade screwed up his mouth. “There are bad people there. Bad people who have information that can cause a lot of harm. They need to be stopped.” He paused, and Peter kept his eye trained on the ever-hazy quality of Wade’s expression, serious, even with the way Peter’s eyes wanted to slide away. Finally Wade let out a long sigh and his shoulders dropped. His head tilted up and his eyes slipped closed and for a second he was the description of defeated, sitting against the back of the couch like it was all that was holding him up in the world. Then he roused himself. “It’s tiring, trying to do good and *be* good at the same time.”

“I know what you mean,” Peter murmured.

“It would be *simple*,” Wade said emphatically, “horribly simple to just—” he cut himself off with a disgusted noise. “But that would make me as bad as them. And I’ve been bad before. I’ve been very bad. I’ve done really horrible—” he cut himself off again. “But I want to be different. I don’t want to be an anti-hero. Ugh, I just want to be...” he trailed off, plucking again at the drawstrings of his hoodie, this time almost exasperatedly.

“Spiderman,” Peter said simply. It was obvious, in the morals Wade was trying to uphold, in the way his eyes looked when he spoke of Peter’s alter ego, in the jacket he was wearing. “You want to be Spiderman.”

Wade made a noise halfway between a sigh and a laugh, and looked, really looked, into Peter’s eyes.

“I suppose you’re right,” he said. “He’s the goal. He’s done everything—” Wade made a chopping motion with his hand, “right. He succeeded in carrying the burden. I want to be everything his is. And more, if that’s even possible.”

Peter cracked a sideways smile. There was always room to improve. He knew that. And no matter what Wade implied, he was in no way the pinnacle of morality. He wasn’t perfect. No one was.

“I’m sure you’ll do good,” Peter said instead. “I mean, it looks to me like you’re doing pretty good. And as your husband I’ll have you know that my word is law.”

Wade grinned, and then it dimmed. “Did that...” his voice wavered. “Did I just ruin everything?”

Peter furrowed his brow. “Why would that have ruined anything?”

Wade shrugged half-heartedly. “I mean, I think I just blatantly told you I’ve killed people in the past.”

Peter frowned. He hadn’t made that connection, but Wade was essentially correct, he had implied that pretty heavily. “But you don’t plan on killing anyone else, correct? That’s not a very Spiderman thing to do.”

“No! No, I want to leave that part of me,” he made a shoving motion, “firmly in the past.”

Peter shrugged. “Then no. You haven’t ruined anything. This is a shame-free zone. I don’t judge present-you on past-you’s actions.”

Wade narrowed his eye. “Is this a prostitute thing?”

Peter jerked back, flabbergasted. “A *prostitute thing*?” Peter asked, mildly offended. “What does that even *mean*?”

Wade shrugged, “I don’t know. Being down with illegalities because your entire profession is technically illegal? I’d say the same thing to drug dealer or a counterfeiter.”

“Hmmpf,” Peter said, crossing his arms, but he couldn’t really disagree.

“So is it?” Wade asked. “Is this like, one thug to another? Or... what?”

Peter didn’t know how to answer that. He tried to put himself into the mindset of someone who wasn’t in his line of work. No, not that work, the hero one. As Spiderman, he saw the lowest of the low, he fought the guys who couldn’t turn their lives around. But he also fought the guys who could, and who did. He’d taken down robbers and muggers, and talked to them, and hadn’t seen them again. And no, he had no proof that those few and far between had made things right, but he’d know if they’d come back into the rut of theft and they hadn’t. Spiderman could think the best of anyone, could trust that someone who was a murderer but who decided he didn’t want to kill anymore could turn over a new leaf. He could afford to, because Spiderman could take that man down if he changed his mind.

So Peter tried to think from a different perspective. What would Peter Prostitute-and-definitely-not-a-hero Parker think about Wade? Would he be scared? Disgusted? Would he run away screaming into the night? He tried to force out his protective instinct, tried to wipe thoughts of his own exploits, his less than stellar moments facing down villains, from his mind. He tried to return his mind to before he’d gained life altering powers, and life altering responsibility.

It was impossible. He *was* Spiderman. He could not separate himself from Spiderman any more than he could separate himself from Peter Parker. They were the same person. And he trusted Wade, not just because he knew he was strong enough to stop Wade if push came to shove, but because Wade wanted to change. So, was it the prostitute thing? Definitely not. Was it the hero thing? It was hard to tell. Thankfully, Wade hadn’t asked if it was the hero thing.

“I don’t think so,” Peter said, hoping he sounded more confident than he felt. “I trust you won’t kill because you know it would be wrong. And I trust you won’t kill because you know that I’m trusting you not to kill. I trust that you wouldn’t break that trust. I’m not... *cool* with you having committed murder, but there’s no reason for me to castigate you now. It’s over, and it will never be a problem again,” he leveled a glare at Wade, “right?”

Wade nodded emphatically.

Peter tossed back his shoulders and stretched his hands, fingers tangled together, far above his head. “You know your moral code now. And, I mean, honestly, I’ve met murderers before. You’re trying. You want to do good.” Peter shrugged.

“You’re not assuaging my fears here, Petey-boy,” Wade said.

“And what fears are those?” Peter asked. “Are you worried I’ll run to the police or something?”

Wade laughed. “Besides the fact that you’d end up in lock-up right next to me if we *did* get caught? Cuz’ you know, your profession is illegal? Which doesn’t matter, because I’m invincible.” He knocked his knuckles against his chest. “No one’s ever gonna get me down.”

“Then what is it? Are you afraid of how I’ll look about you?” Wade didn’t answer. “Ah,” Peter said, “Well don’t worry. We’ve all done things in the past we’re ashamed of. Not—” Peter felt he

needed to point out, “the prostitute thing! Everyone has the capacity to change and grow. Why the fuck would I stamp on your growth. I won’t blame a sapling for a seed’s actions.”

Wade screwed up his expression. “Now don’t go getting all poetical on me, lover boy. I’m not the haiku type.”

Peter rolled his eyes. “That’s what you get for delaying my breakfast.”

“You get lyrical when hangry now?” Wade asked, incredulous.

“Oh shush. I was just trying to illustrate my okayness with you. God, Wade, why are you so hypocritical?”

Wade rolled his eyes. “Let’s go then. We can hit up the shops after a quick stop at Mickey-Dees for a sweet sweet, mcfeast.”

“Get out of here you Mad Max trash,” Peter said, and then held out a hand to help hoist Wade to his feet. He had to temper his strength a little, wouldn’t want to seem too strong, but even then he almost pulled Wade into his chest.

Wade gasped in dramatic agony. “Are you calling Mad Max: Fury Road, all that is Charlize Theron and Beauty, trash?”

“No, I’m calling *you* trash. Of all the things to quote from that movie, you chose Mcfeasting?”

“Witness Me!” Wade shouted, and dragged Peter to the door.

“I guess that’s better,” Peter said, and let himself be towed away, out of the hotel and on to his Mcfeast.

Patron Saint of High-tops

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! My first upload of the new year, I hope it does 2018 justice. 2018. I mean, really.

"I hate shopping," Peter moaned, and collapsed on a bench on a shady, tree-filled path somewhere in Central Park, letting his bags smother him.

Wade laughed.

"Stop," Peter moaned louder. "I'm dying. Rescue me."

Wade shoved some bags onto the ground. "There, look, you can feel the sun against your flesh again."

Peter leaned forward to see the bags that had fallen onto the grass. In doing so, more bags slipped from their precarious perch atop his body and fell to the ground. Peter groaned.

"Oh stop complaining, you're getting free clothes. Live a little."

"You didn't just have to strip and redress thirteen billion times."

"No, but I had to hear you complain about it the entire time. That was bad enough." Wade lowered himself onto the seat next to Peter. He kicked at one of the bags, leaving a boot print on the serene white plastic. Peter glared at it.

"I feel like I've never shopped this much in my life," Peter said with a sigh. "Hand-me-downs and thrift shop finds my whole life, and suddenly piles and piles of—" he toed at one of the bags, and when his new shoes caught his eye he couldn't help but pause and stare. They were bright red converse high-tops, the kind Peter had wanted since Flash Thompson walked into second grade with a dark blue pair and Peter had truly known the feeling of envy.

"Garbage?" Wade guessed, trying to provide an end to Peter's sentence. "Meaningless capitalist waste? Yuppie clothes?"

Peter let loose a surprised laugh. "No, they aren't garbage, or yuppie...whatever. They're just *really nice*, you know? Way nicer than I've ever even been in the same room with, before. I'm floundering here, O' husband mine."

Wade shrugged. "Just wear 'em, Pete. They're just clothes. They might have cost a dollar, or they might have cost a hundred—"

"Definitely closer to a hundred," Peter muttered beneath his breath. "*More* than a hundred."

"But it doesn't matter," Wade said, speaking over Peter's mutters. "They aren't worth anything. They keep you clean and looking good, but they're just clothes, and it's just money. It ain't nothing but a thing."

Peter pursed his lips. He wasn't sure of much, but he was sure that money wasn't just a thing. If money didn't matter than he wouldn't have been on that street corner in the first place, but that was neither here nor there.

"And you look good in 'em," Wade admitted. "You look damn fine. And they'll keep you for a while. Won't have to go clothes shopping for a hot minute."

Peter thought about a future that included a wardrobe's worth of clothes.

"I'm going to need a suitcase," Peter said, pseudo-mutinously.

"We'll pick one up on the way back," Wade said with a flippant wave of his hand.

"Hmmpf."

"You look *good*," Wade insisted, as if that was what was bothering Peter.

"I look like a tired man who somehow miraculously survived a battle to the death."

"With shopping bags," Wade said, deadpan.

"No. With *shopping*. All those clothes. All that walking. All those women trying to help!"

"They were being nice," Wade defended.

"They were being *too* nice," Peter hissed. "They kept bringing back more and more. T-shirts and jeans, those are fine. I can find my own, I don't need help, but I'll deal. Shorts, jackets, sweaters. Those are ok too I guess. I don't think I'll need everything, the weather is just on that even keel between cold and warm, I think I would have done fine with a hoodie, but whatever. But then the button-ups! And not even the suit ones! Like, yeah, I get it, we're going to be mingling. I guess I might as well get a suit just in case the tux is denim or something—"

"You'll need a suit for the cocktail party tomorrow night," Wade corrected.

"Oh. Well. First off, we'll be talking about how much you suck at pre-planning. Give me more info sooner. Cocktail party? Is this, like, *pre-gala* mingling? Whatever, that's not the point right now. The point is the button downs and the khaki pants, and the grey vest with soft accented designs of vines embroidered in gold thread so thin it could be actual sunlight!"

"Oh god. Poetics! Not the curse of the hangry!" Wade pressed his palms to Peter's cheeks and kissed him on the forehead. "My poor lil' temptress."

"The *problem*," Peter said, emphasizing the word to try and smother Wade's excitement, "is the jogging shorts and muscle shirts. I don't jog, Wade!"

"You don't know when you might want to start," Wade said calmly.

"The problem is the salmon pink boating shorts, the colored sleeveless shirts, the ripped black skinny jeans, the fishnet shirt... thingy. The problem is I tried on so many clothes today I don't even know what of it I like! And you bought them all anyway!!"

Peter didn't realize how worked up he'd gotten till his face was flushed and his breathing uneven. Wade didn't seem even the tiniest bit upset. He looked at Peter with the same calmness he'd held all day, while Peter had bitched and moaned and practically had to be pulled from store to store. "You might not like them," Wade said, after a moment of them staring at each other, Peter red-

faced, Wade with a soft smile playing around the corners of his lips, “but you get them. You say you’ve always had hand-me-downs? So how do you know what you like if all you’ve ever had was given to you.”

Peter’s shoulders slammed back, his chin shot up. “If you think I wasn’t allowed to choose, or that I was *neglected*, boy are you wrong. My Au—” he cut himself off, feeling too off-balanced to bring Aunt May into this, but before he could start again, Wade was talking.

“That isn’t what I meant. I don’t think you were neglected, or ill taken care of. I’m sure you were raised by loving people, but I don’t for a minute think you were raised by wealthy people.”

“Well, no,” Peter said, still feeling defensive, “but what does that matter?”

Wade growled a little, sounding frustrated. “I’m trying to give you options, Pete. Is that so bad? Yeah, maybe you don’t jog, or maybe you don’t want to look like a frat boy or a punk bassist or a pretty fairy princess! But now you have the option. And if I left it to you all you’d get would be things you’ve always had, t-shirts and jeans. And that’s fine. Peter, really that’s fine, but I want you to be able, if you someday choose to learn to ride a motorcycle or join a punk band or go to a yacht club, to do it. You wouldn’t have to worry, you already have everything. Or at least a window in.” Wade shrugged.

Peter rubbed at his face. “That’s...” he sighed out, “nice.”

“You don’t sound convinced.”

“No! No, it is. It’s very nice of you, really. I just,” he ran a hand through his hair, “I’m not used to having much. Or. Anything, really. Certainly not extras.”

Wade spread his arms wide. “Well now you do. Savor in it. Stop stressing so much. If you end up really hating something just burn it.”

“Or *donate* it,” Peter said slowly.

“Yeah I guess.” Wade pushed one of the bags with the toe of his boot.

Peter sighed. “Alright, let me gather up my *windows*.” He stuck a foot out and tried to drag as many bags toward him as he could with a single foot. It wasn’t the most effective way to do what he was doing, certainly.

Wade watched him flounder for a full five minutes before getting to his feet and picking the bags up. There were so many they bundled outward from his hands like he was holding on to giant clouds. “C’mon Petey-Pie, we’re going to go buy ice cream cones and a duffel bag, and then we’re going to head back and get you some dinner because I can sense your hanger coming out.”

Peter rolled his eyes but let himself be convinced to join the land of the standing. “I don’t get *hangry*,” Peter said as they walked down the wooded path, avoiding roller-bladers and joggers, kids walking their dogs and families out for a midday stroll.

“Sure you don’t,” Wade said, sounding utterly unconvinced.

“I *don’t*,” Peter insisted. He looked at the gargantuan amount of bags Wade was carrying and felt a little stirring of guilt.

“I can carry those,” Peter said. He reached down to grab one of the handful of handles from Wade’s grasp, but Wade evaded him.

"I'm buying the things, I can carry them," Wade said.

"But you're buying them for *me*. It feels wrong to make you spend your money and then not even help with the carrying. They must weigh a ton." And Peter had super Spidey strength. They wouldn't be anything to him. Wade on the other hand...

"They're fine," Wade said and hefted one of his hands up to gesture with the bags at a nearby ice cream cart.

"I want to help," Peter said adamantly. "They're *my* clothes. It doesn't feel right to make you carry them."

"Look," Wade said as he turned to face Peter straight on. He raised his arms aloft, making a T with his body. The bags hung from his hands, like boulders, but he stood like that, not even seeming to strain. "It's really nothing."

Peter quirked an eyebrow. "You're strong."

Wade shrugged. "I work out."

Peter pursed his lips, tried to restrain himself, and altogether failed. "Girl look at that body! Girl look at that body! Girl look at that body!"

"I work out!" Wade sang along.

Peter broke out laughing. "You are such a dork."

"*You're* the one who brought up 'I'm Sexy and I know it!' I think of the two of us, you're the dork. Just for that, I'm buying you animal print pants."

"Well *you're* the one who knew what I was referencing. And I prefer 'Party Rock Anthem' anyway. So you can suck it."

Wade gasped dramatically. "I am offended, Petey. Me and the passion in my pants."

"Oh my god," Peter groaned.

"What?" Wade asked condescendingly, "I can't help it. I'm sexy and I know it." He winked at Peter.

"I'm divorcing you," Peter deadpanned.

"Well I'm not buying an *ex*-husband ice cream, so..."

Peter huffed. "Fine. I guess I'll stay, but just for the ice cream."

"Then get with it, man," Wade said. "I've got my hands full, here. Dig my wallet out of my pocket and go buy us some ice cream. I want cookies n' cream. Ooohhh! No, I want raspberry sherbert! Yeah. Sherbert."

Peter leveled Wade with a glare. "If I *do* buy us ice cream, and don't think I'm unaware that this is all probably just a ploy to get me to touch your butt in order to get your wallet, then how are you even going to hold it to eat it? Your hands are full."

Wade looked down at his hands and then frowned, as if they had personally offended him. "I didn't think of that."

“Well that’s why you have me here,” Peter said. “Why don’t I just take half the bags from you, and then you’ll have one hand to hold an ice cream with, and *I’ll* have one hand to hold ice cream with. And I won’t have to go digging through your pants just to get your money.”

Wade lifted one of his hands, frowning. “I don’t know if you’ll be able to carry them. At least, not comfortably or for long. They’re kind of heavy.”

Peter raised an eyebrow. “I thought you said they *weren’t* heavy.”

Wade stuck his tongue out.

“That’s what I thought,” Peter said, and quicker than a whip, reached out and snatched the handful of bags from Wade, leaving the man looking very lopsided. He struggled for a moment to adjust his hold so none of the handles were tangled, and then straightened up.

Wade looked at Peter’s face, and then the poof of bags Peter was holding, and then at Peter’s arm. Peter wasn’t even trying. The bags were nothing. Peter could lift a bus above his head and not break a sweat. “What, like it’s hard?” Peter asked. He then shrugged, and throwing Wade’s words back in his face, said, “I work out.”

Wade gasped and his free hand flew to his heart. “Peter! My one true love! We have to watch Legally Blonde when we get back to the hotel.”

“After ice cream,” Peter stated firmly, but then nodded. “Yeah, of course. Who doesn’t love Elle Woods?”

“Movie marathon!” Wade squealed and pranced over to the ice cream truck, Peter close on his heels.

Patron Saint of Gilded Rooms

Chapter Notes

I've had a hella busy week or I would have uploaded this chapter earlier. I hope it's up to snuff :D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Stop fidgeting,” Wade reprimanded in a whisper as they walked through the gold plated doors.

Gold plated. Doors. Because what screamed wealth more than coating a piece of wood and glass in gold? Jesus. They were walking into the most expensive-looking restaurant Peter had ever seen, and he wanted to roll up into a ball and hide his head and never let anyone see his ratty ass. But he did what Wade said and moved his hands away from each other, where they were fiddling with this cuffs, and down to his sides. He didn't want to embarrass Wade in this absolutely opulent restaurant.

He didn't want to embarrass himself either, but he had the gut-churning feeling that he would end up embarrassing himself no matter what.

Wade stopped a few steps in and let a hand rest on the small of Peter's back. Peter flexed his shoulders in lieu of pulling at his cuffs, and heard the strain of his suit jacket against his muscles. He immediately let his shoulders slump, not wanting to tear the fabric of his new suit the first time he ever wore it. It was tight, but Peter had the feeling that was just the way suits were, and it wasn't because it was an ill fit. The only other suit he'd ever worn was for his high school graduation, what felt like a million years ago, and that was a hand-me-down of Uncle Ben's that had made Aunt May cry to see hanging off Peter's lithe frame. It had been about two sizes too big, and Peter had taken it off as soon as they'd gotten home. Peter had no idea what had happened to it. Maybe it had been sold, or donated, or was still sitting in a dusty closet of a house Peter couldn't go back to.

“Reservations for two,” Wade said to the maître'd, and he pushed at Peter's back, gently, but with constant pressure until Peter got the hint and stepped up.

“Your name?” the maître'd asked. He was wearing a suit so black he almost blended into the shadows that the dim lamps cast upon the farther walls.

“Wilson,” Wade said, and he sounded confident. Cool, calm, collected. Peter hid his quivering hands in his pockets and tried to look as stoically handsome as all those Fabio-esque men on the front of romance novels. He didn't think he had the hair for it.

The maître'd bowed a little and then led them through a dining area filled with quiet chatter and the tinkling of metal and glass as couples ate. Every table was a table for two, with white table clothes that hung low to the ground, and stout candles as the only source of light beside the dim wall lamps placed in each corner. At an empty table in the center of the room, the man stopped. Wade, ever the gentleman, pulled out a seat for Peter, which Peter sat in hesitantly, and then took a seat himself.

The man placed a pair of menus on the table and with another bow, stepped away.

Peter tapped his fingers against the table for a moment before grabbing for the menu and flipping it open.

Wade watched him solemnly. Peter could feel his eyes as he flipped through the menu, not really reading anything. Peter jiggled his leg under the table, and then crossed one leg over the other in an effort to trick them into stopping their fidgeting. Finally Wade opened his own menu and looked down in quiet contemplation.

Peter jerked forward, or started to and then stopped himself before leaning forward with more obvious restraint. "I don't like this," he whispered to Wade. It came out sounding more like a hiss.

Wade glanced up, unhurried, unworried, and met Peter's eyes straight on. "I know," he said, low enough to sound intimate, but not actually trying to hide his words. "But you need to be able to do this." He frowned. "Unless you've changed your mind."

"I haven't changed my mind," Peter spluttered.

Wade gave Peter a significant look.

Peter let his shoulders drop, he slumped a little, and then self-consciously looked around him at the other well-dressed and utterly well-behaved diners, and straightened up again into something stiff and uncomfortable. "Fine. It's just... I'm just..." he leaned forward into a whisper again, "I don't like it here."

Wade made a show of looking around him. "Is it the people? The monochrome waitstaff?" He rapped on the table with his knuckles. "The doilies? The wine glasses?"

Peter looked at the empty wine glasses on the table, waiting to be filled. There was a stripe of gold filigree around the rim and etched curly-cues in the stem and base.

"Definitely the wine glass," Peter said.

"But really," Wade said, "darling, my husband, why don't you want to be sitting at this very nice table in this very nice restaurant with your very nice spouse?"

Peter grimaced. "It isn't you. Or the table or the restaurant." He sighed out. "Ok, maybe it's the restaurant. This place is *fancy*. And I'm, well," he looked down at himself deprecatingly.

When Peter looked up Wade was looking at him with incredulity. "Uhh... insufferably hot?" Wade asked.

Peter frowned at him. "No, like gangly and below average-looking, and kind of whiney?"

Wade's mouth dropped open. "What? No, you're like, distractingly hot. I mean, yeah, you're super skinny and I want to feed you, like, fourteen thousand pounds of food, but you are the super opposite of unattractive." Wade pursed his lips. "Is it normal for," his tone dropped to a whisper, "sex workers," then increased to normal levels again, "to think they're unattractive? Isn't the whole point of your profession to be, well, insanely attractive or something?"

"I'm pretty sure that in no part of me desperately wanting to be able to feed myself by standing on street corners in the almost dark and offering," Peter glanced around self-consciously, "stuff... for money, requires me to be *attractive*. Just, like, passably good-looking in dark of night and willing and able to do... stuff."

“Uh-huh,” Wade said, with a distinct tone of disbelief. “Sure. Whatever you say. Not attractive. Right.”

Peter rolled his eyes.

“And it’s not like I’m super attractive or anything,” Wade said, sounding dead serious, “so I think I’d know physical perfection when I saw it.”

Peter squinted at him, trying to see him as anything less than beautiful. (And also, admittedly, trying to get his eyes to see the sharp lines and contrasts of shadow that must be there, but that were always coming out hazy). “Are you toying with me?” Peter asked, puzzled.

“What? No.” Wade sounded equally as puzzled. “And anyway, not everyone here is super hot. Half of these people are rich old farts that look more related to dinosaurs than humans.”

Peter snorted.

“So what’s the issue, really?” Wade asked. “Is it the lack of grease and milkshakes? Is it the pretending to be married in public thing? Because the former we can fix later tonight, but the latter we really can’t do anything about unless you’re backing out.”

Peter rolled his eyes. “I’m not backing out. I just feel a little…” he hunched a little and clutched at his shoulder with the opposite hand, “out of place. I’m not, rich, or fancy and posh or whatever. I’m not going to know what to order or how to pronounce it, and I’m not going to know which fork to use.”

“This isn’t Princess Diaries,” Wade said. “Did you even look at the menu? Are you telling me you don’t know what filet mignon is? Or Herb-crusted salmon?”

Peter flushed.

“And there are only two forks. The main fork, for entrée-stabbing, and the side fork for hoes, like salads. There is only one spoon for that matter, and there are two knives, but one is dull and is obviously used for buttering bread, while the other is serrated. I think you’re old enough to know how to use a steak knife.”

“Hah,” Peter said, sounding sort of strangled.

“And you look nice,” Wade said, ignoring Peter as his face heated up. “And I don’t mean that in a sexual, here’s my booty and a million dollars, way. I mean you look nice in that suit. It fits you, and you fit it, and if you’d stop fidgeting and hunching and wrinkling that very pleasantly-colored tie, you’d absolutely look just as posh and fancy as any of the turds in here.”

This time Peter’s flush was of a different kind of warmth.

“Excuse me,” said a soft feminine voice, and they both turned to find a young woman in a simple, white collared shirt with an apron wrapped around her waist, looking at them expectantly and holding an unopened bottle of wine, “would you like to try this 2008 Egon Müller Scharzhofberger Spätlese Riesling? Or do you have something else in mind?”

Wade waved a hand, “That’s fine, leave the bottle.” She nodded and set about filling their glasses with the wine before leaving the uncorked bottle between them. Peter wasn’t sure if he should mention he wasn’t legally old enough to drink.

“And have you decided on your meals?” she asked.

“Give us another moment,” Wade said, and with a small bow of her head she walked away.

Peter took that moment to look at the menu, really look at it, and saw that as Wade said, nothing was incomprehensible or so fancy it made his head spin. No, it had steak and chicken and fish. Peter took a long minute to peruse the pasta section, because, mmmmmmm pasta. Gotta love those carbs.

“What are you getting?” Peter asked Wade, curious and trying to make up his own mind. There were so many options.

“Steak tartare?” Wade mused aloud. “Caviar? I want something raw, but this place don’t got no sushi.”

“Raw?” Peter asked incredulously. “Does that mean that Steak...tartar? Is it—”

“Raw? Yes, Baby Boy. Use them context clues, hot stuff.”

Peter mock-gagged.

“Hey! Don’t knock it till you try it.”

“Then I’ll *never* be knocking it, because I’m *never* going to try it.”

“Spoilsport.” Wade flipped through the menu. “What are you going to get?”

“I’m thinking...hmmm...” Peter looked down at the menu, letting his eyes rove the menu quicker, ever quicker, “Shrimp Scampi? Or Chicken Parmesan? Something protein-ey and not...raw.”

“Awww,” Wade whined, “won’t you try my raw ground steak and raw egg mix?”

Peter lifted his eyebrows. “You’re a disgusting trash person.”

Wade made a little curtsying motion. “Trash person at your service.”

At that moment the server returned. “May I take your order?”

Peter looked to Wade, but Wade gestured that Peter should go first. He looked at the menu for another second before choosing a pasta based solely on the mention of bacon in the description. “Chicken Carbonara?” he said, with an upward lilt that made it sound like he was asking a question. Because confidence? What’s that?

The woman nodded and looked to Wade. Peter also looked to Wade, trying to imply with his eyes that if Wade ordered raw beef Peter was going to shove the wine bottle down his throat.

“I think I’ll have the lobster tail with risotto and a bowl of corn chowder.”

“Good,” Peter muttered beneath his breath and Wade quirked a smile.

“I’ll have that right out,” the server said, and stepped away from the table and then Peter and Wade were alone again.

There was a beat of nothingness where Peter looked at Wade without really seeing him, and where Wade said nothing, that felt very awkward in nature. And then Wade slumped and said, “Man, you cannot *imagine* how long it’s been since I’ve had a good bowl of corn chowder. Holy moly, Pete, it’s gonna be so *good*.”

Peter laughed and then breathed out through his nose. He lowered his voice when he spoke to a note just above that of a whisper. "Is this practice really necessary?"

"It *is*!" Wade insisted loudly. A few of the other diners stopped to stare before going back to their meals.

Peter arched an eyebrow.

"No really," Wade said in a more intimate tone of voice. "Besides us having to look the part of loving husbands, which we're already doing pretty great at, we also have to look like we got money and class."

"Hah! Good luck with that."

Wade rolled his eyes. "Stop it. That's the point. The point is to look like two wealthy husbands who are totally rich and totally in love with each other, because nothing will set off alarm bells more than a lone, poor, man at a rich-people gala. We need to be very married and very rich."

"I can do the married thing, I think," Peter said slowly.

"I know you can. You're already doing it. We're as married as we can be, *right now*."

Peter shifted in his seat. "Well, um, glad to hear that. I don't really have any experience with marriage. I don't know if this is what marriage feels like." Peter shrugged.

"I've been married," Wade said, as if it was nothing. As if it didn't turn Peter on his ear.

And then Peter had to wonder for a long minute why that had been a surprise. He didn't know Wade. Wade could *still* be married, could have a wife and a kid, or a husband and a dog, or be a professional scuba instructor, or a nomad who's traveled the world, or a civil war enthusiast, or any number of things, because Peter didn't know Wade. They were friends by now, Peter liked to think, but they weren't crazily close.

Peter couldn't picture Wade married.

Peter realized regrettably that he hadn't responded in close to a minute. "Sorry, you just surprised me. You're married?"

"Past tense," Wade corrected. "Now I'm divorced." He shrugged. "It was a match made in heaven, and it was a break up for the gods."

Peter fidgeted with his cuffs beneath the table, realized what he was doing, and dropped his hands. He tried to flex his shoulders but stopped and at the faintest sound of cloth straining. "I'm... sorry?"

Wade shrugged. "Don't be. It was whatever, and then it stopped, and I got over it. I don't really want to talk about it."

"Ok," Peter said. He drummed his fingers on the table. "But this was close? Like, you know what marriage is like, right? Are we... passing for married?"

Wade barked out a laugh. "If you'd stop being so nervous, the answer would be yes. I think you're the sweetest S.O. I've ever had."

Peter felt his cheeks warm. "Stop it."

“No, but you are,” Wade said, “and you’re funny to boot. What else could a man ask for in a husband?”

Peter shrugged crookedly. “I don’t know. Competence? The ability to do adult things? I’ve never even done my taxes.”

Wade scoffed. “Don’t worry. Being my husband won’t necessitate you do any fucking *taxes*, Pete. Jesus. I can barely fold my laundry, you think I do my own *taxes*?”

Peter pursed his lips. “Ok. So I’m sweet and funny. And being those things will make me a good husband?”

“No,” Wade said, “being those things helps me like you, a lot. You’re funny, and I like that you’re funny. You’re sweet, and I like that you’re sweet. You say funny sweet things to me, and that makes me happy. You’d be a good friend, Peter.”

“Thank you,” Peter said awkwardly, not sure where Wade was going with this.

“And a husband is just a best friend above and beyond the rest. Do you think you can be my friend?”

Peter thought that Wade sounded a tad more whimsical and hopeful than he had reason to. “I think we are friends.”

“Good, then all we need to work on is the kissing and the fancy-shmancy stuff, and you’ll be good.”

Peter spluttered. “I can kiss!”

Wade raised his hands placatingly. “Listen, hot stuff, I’m sure you can. But it’s gotta look natural, see? And so our first smooch can’t be in front of the people we need to be pulling wool over the eyes of. Cuz it won’t look *natural*.”

“I guess,” Peter muttered and crossed his arms.

“And the fancy-shmancy stuff,” Wade repeated, “we need to work on that.”

Peter looked down at his hands resting in his lap. Then he looked at Wade and how he looked like he belonged in the restaurant. Even with the cursing and the general ridiculousness of everything he said, he still looked like a rich guy, looking at home in his three-piece suit with the fragile wine glass held loosely in his hands. He looked like he ate in places like this every day. Peter looked like a high school runaway who stole his dad’s credit card before he fled and decided to waste all of it on ill-fitting clothes. He looked like a kid out of his depth.

Peter sighed out a long breath, and straightened his shoulders. He tried to imitate Wade’s casual almost-sprawled, but feared he probably looked stiff and uncomfortable. Mostly because that’s what he felt.

Wade quirked a knowing smile at him. “You look like a two by four. Relax a little. It isn’t the thought of kissing me that’s got you looking like a board, is it?”

Before Peter could answer, before Peter could even think about it, their server was there, holding their plates. She placed their meals before them and left after Peter and Wade both thanked her. Peter grabbed a fork, speared a piece of chicken and chunk of pasta and stuck it in his face. It was good, but Peter’s mind was somewhere else.

Was it the thought of kissing Wade that him feeling awkward and ill-fitting in his brand new suit? Peter took a millisecond to self-examine his reasoning, but, no, it wasn't the kissing. Wade was attractive. Wade was kind. And even if Wade wasn't paying Peter an exorbitant fee to pretend to be his husband, Peter would still probably have kissed him if Wade had asked him. No. The problem definitely wasn't the kissing. Peter took another millisecond to wonder what Wade's lips would feel like against his. Then he took another millisecond, because one wasn't enough.

He blinked and Wade was staring at him searchingly, and Peter specifically did not look at Wade's lips.

Or at the way his edges refused to define themselves, still laying slightly hazy against the rest of the world.

"No," Peter said after swallowing. "I wouldn't be in the kind of profession I'm in if I minded a kiss or two, would I?" He tried to smirk, to look confident. He feared that he failed pretty drastically.

"Then what's got your tie in a twist?" Wade ran his fingers down his own tie, slowly, letting his fingers warp and bend the silk, making it slither over his knuckles.

Peter let his arms flop out, almost knocking over his bowl of pasta and his glass of wine in one wide swing. "Look at me. I don't fit in in places like this."

Wade raised his eyebrow incredulously. "And you think I *do*?"

Peter examined Wade's easy bearing. "I don't think you'd look out of place anywhere," Peter said, perhaps a shade too honestly.

Wade practically preened.

"You do," Peter repeated, "you'd probably look just as at ease at a roller derby or a night club or a lecture series or a scuba diving excursion. You look like you fit right in here, like you've been fine-dining all your life."

Wade snorted. "I get around a lot, sure, but I wouldn't say all my life."

Peter threw up his hands, almost hitting the edge of the table, which would probably have sent both their meals tumbling. He noticed only peripherally. "But you look so at ease!"

Wade shrugged, and began stabbing at his risotto flippantly. "That's got nothing to do with being a fancy-pants, Petey-boy. All that requires is not giving a flying fuck about what anyone thinks about you."

Wade hadn't lowered his voice when he spoke and in the quiet of the dining room the expletive sounded louder and courser than it probably actually was. Peter hissed and looked around self-consciously, but no one was looking their way.

"Or realizing that no one *does* give a fuck. Like, everyone's all wrapped up in their own heads, no one even notices anything dumb *you* do because everyone's worried that everyone else will notice some dumb thing *they* did. It's cyclical, see?"

"So," Peter said slowly, "your advice is to just...not care?"

Wade stuck a forkful of risotto in his mouth and nodded. "Yeah," he said, un-chewed risotto still in his mouth, "it's always worked for me."

Peter blinked. "I can see that."

"So relax. You look like you belong in this hoity-toity club, so just relax, and then you'll *feel* like you belong in his hoity-toity club, and then you'll *really* look like you belong. Like, let your hair down."

Peter ran a finger through his locks, fingering where the ends were beginning to curl up at the nape of his neck. "I might be in need of a haircut, but I don't think my hair is long enough to be let down."

"Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hip 'do."

"I will dump your corn chowder over your head."

Wade gasped dramatically and clutched his bowl of chowder closer to his chest. Peter breath hitched, imagining the corn chowder sloshing over the edge and ruining the probably very expensive suit Wade had on. Thankfully, it didn't, Wade moved the bowl, tilted it just enough that the chowder sloshed only up on the walls of the bowl, without a single drop hitting his suit. "You'll never get to my corn chowder now!" He lifted the bowl to his lips and began drinking from the bowl as if he wasn't breaking three thousand rules of etiquette.

"Use your spoon!" Peter snapped. He glanced at the other diners, nervous that anyone in his upper-crust establishment would see his dining partner drinking from a bowl like a heathen.

Wade shook his head, and Peter flinched backwards, but the bowl at his lip didn't waver and none of the chowder got anywhere it wasn't supposed to. Peter watched as Wade tilted the bowl further and further back, watched as his Adams apple bobbed. Peter swallowed. And then finally, when the bowl was almost vertical, Wade made a satisfied noise and plunked the bowl back on the table, leaving his corn-chowder 'stache plainly visible.

Peter pinched his lips to keep himself from laughing.

Instead of using the napkin that was right by his elbow, Wade wiped the excess corn chowder off his upper lip with the back of his hand and then licked it off.

Peter tried to find it disgusting instead of attractive and failed pretty miserably.

"Maybe you should have used a straw," Peter said mock-sternly.

"Next time." Wade sighed out, contentedly.

Peter shook his head, and tried, surreptitiously, to see if anyone had noticed how childish Wade had behaved. But, like Wade had mentioned, none of them seemed to care or to have even seen it. Peter felt his shoulder's slumping and he leaned back in his chair, letting his posture loosen for the first time since they entered the restaurant.

"There you go," Wade commended, "relax a little. Look more comfortable in your skin."

"*You* look more comfortable in *your* skin," Peter retorted lamely, but he didn't tense again, his posture stayed slack and relaxed. He felt actually comfortable. He was pretty sure that about 80% of the reason for that was just talking to Wade, not what he had been saying. Wade, despite his abrasiveness and how loud and vulgar he could be, had a very relaxing presence.

Wade raised his glass and Peter raised his as well. "A toast," Wade said, "to two husbands, both looking attractive and comfortable in their respective skins."

“I’ll drink to that,” Peter said, and clinked his glass against Wade’s.

Chapter End Notes

My hella busy week:

Got to meet beautiful Authors: Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, authors of the Pendergast Series (Seriously awesome. If you love thriller, mysteries with real good fake-science and disguises and smooth southern FBI Special Agents who will one-up shit-stain jerk-faces with a smooth word, a cruel look, and the kind of melodrama usually reserved for Oscar Wilde and Sherlock Holmes. Seriously I love them so much. The first book of the series is Relic, but my favorite is Still Life with Crows) It was a book signing and discussion about their newest book. But, hey, I realized that I hadn't had time to read the last 4 books in the series (busy life) so I had to abandon having a life in order to read a book a day (so long).

This was compounded by the fact that I was sick, which, Pro: Got sent home from work, Con: So sick

And then I got a call from my mother saying my Grandfather had passed. And we'd never been super close, but still, he was my grandfather, and now I don't know what to do about the Funeral, which is a 14 hr car ride and 5 states away, and I already lost some days and income for being sick, I really don't want to have to take off more. And I'd taken a week off in November for a different Funeral. I don't know, it's just been a busy week, ups and downs, you know?

Patron Saint of Sleep

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter woke the next morning with a warmth spreading out along his back. He hummed a little, feeling warm and happy, before realizing that having a long warmth pressed against him was not a normal way for him to wake up.

He still didn't panic. He might have, another morning, but this morning he still felt warm and safe, and the feel of a soft exhale against the back of his neck did not worry him any more than the dip of the bed as the person behind him shifted. Any other morning he might have panicked in those first few seconds of waking, but on this morning, with Wade, obviously Wade, pressed against him, he did not. Because, well, it had to be Wade.

Peter's eyes lifted open slowly. He wasn't yet sure if he wanted to be fully awake yet. He was warm and comfortable. Last night was a million miles away, and so was tomorrow. The Gala seemed like an impossible fantasy. That street corner Wade had found him on seemed a different reality, a different lifetime. But as he opened his eyes, he saw the cream walls the accents of gold in the chairs and dressers, he saw the pale-colored curtains letting the sunlight peek in, and he heard grunt Wade behind him, felt him shift. This was the same room Peter had been staying in since Monday night. This was not the room Wade had been staying in.

Peter frowned and turned over, letting the billion count sheets slither around him unimpeded. Wade was facing him, eyes closed, a small divot between his eyebrows that made him look uncomfortable. He'd pulled the sheets up to his chin and had them bunched there, curled in his hands, tight against his throat. He looked bigger, even curled up in his sleep, he looked like bulging muscles and wide panes, and Peter could almost forget that Wade was graceful and lithe when he moved, not like a dancer, but like a predator stalking forward, slinking towards its prey. But like this, hunched in on himself he looked too big for his skin, almost oafish. Maybe it was *because* he was curled into himself. A grown adult in a childlike pose.

Peter himself frowned, looking at the large man lying beside him in *his* bed at—he checked the clock on the bedside table—9:27am. Why was he *here*? In bed, with Peter? In Peter's bed?

Peter blinked a few times, but no, the image of Wade in his bed, curled up like an oversized five year old didn't disappear. Wade stayed there. In Peter's bed. Clutching Peter's sheets. Frowning.

"Why are you in my bed?" Peter asked abruptly, only the slightest hint of huskiness in his voice showed how recently he'd awoken.

Wade jerked awake, and lunged at Peter, all hints of sleep gone, and Peter reacted without thinking, his body moved on its own, rolling and arcing away from the oncoming force. Peter landed on the floor beside the bed on his fingertips and toes, crouched low, waiting for a further attack.

A startled noise from the bed made Peter lift his head slightly so he could see Wade, who was positioned on the bed in a way that made it obvious that, if Peter hadn't moved, Wade would have had an arm to his throat and his legs locked by the weight of Wade straddling him. But Peter had moved, and Wade looked almost silly, crouched over nothing but a down comforter and silky pillows.

Wade looked around him, eyes foggy with sleep, expression somewhere between confusion and regret. “What? Why were—?” His eyes caught Peter, body tensed from another attack, crouching on the floor, and his face crumpled. He slumped into himself as he curled into something more resembling a sitting position. “Did I attack you?” he asked, his voice so small, so hesitant of receiving the answer Peter was pretty sure he already knew.

Peter made himself relax, made himself pull back his shoulders, loosen his stance, get to his knees so he could look Wade in the eye. “Yes. You lunged for me.”

Wade bowed his head slowly, pushing his face lower and lower until they met his hands. “I’m sorry,” Wade said, his voice muffled but still distinguishable. “I’m trying to be better. I really am.”

Peter wanted to ask if Wade would have killed him if Peter hadn’t dodged, but he wasn’t sure he’d like the answer.

“PTSD?” Peter asked. He’d known some veterans who reacted badly to certain, sudden occurrences, anywhere from fireworks to surprising them in their house, but Wade was shaking his head.

“No, more like instinct, or habit.”

“Your instinct is to attack anyone who’s in bed with you?”

Wade shrugged, looking like he didn’t need chastisement. He obviously already felt bad enough. “There was a time, a very long time that I’m not sure ever really stopped, where a person in my bed meant someone was trying to kill me in my sleep.” He shrugged. “Usually the instinctively attacking while half-asleep saved my life. And it still could, though I get less would-be murderers sneaking into my pad these days. I’m not sure how to turn it off.”

Inanely, the first thing Peter thought, and thus the first thing out of Peter’s mouth was, “This isn’t *your* bed. It’s mine.”

Wade blinked at him and then surveyed the room. “Huh,” he said, “would you look at that!”

“Yeah,” Peter said lamely, and then could think of nothing else to say. There was a pregnant pause, wherein Wade looked around the room, at a loss, and Peter looked at Wade, feeling the same way.

“Why?” Wade asked suddenly.

Peter blinked. “Why what?”

“Why am I in your bed?” Wade clarified.

Peter rubbed at his eye with the heel of his hand. “I don’t know,” Peter griped.

“Did we sleep together last night?” Wade asked, and Peter gaped at him. “Because I really wasn’t planning on sleeping with you. Not that I don’t want to, because you’re super smoking, and awesome to boot, and not because you’re a prozie or anything, because I know ya’ll are strict about ‘glove before love.’ But I’m paying you to get all mission impossible with me, so it seems like too much for me to ask for us to get physical *and* you play the upper-class hubby in a room of bad guys. Plus, you seemed, like, not really into it that first night. Like you were totally willing, but I just got this vibe that you weren’t comfortable about making the beast just then, and I’m never about sleeping with people who are not one hundred percent totally D-T-F, if you know what I mean, so—”

Peter interrupted Wade before his run-on sentence could get even more stream of consciousness than it already was. “No, I mean, I’m glad you’re all about consent in your sexual partners, and thank you for taking my feelings into consideration, but no, I’m pretty sure we did not have sex last night.” Peter gestured first at himself, and then at Wade, drawing Wade’s attention to the fact that they were both still wearing their (now wrinkled) suits from the night before. Wade was sans jacket. Peter was still wearing his, but with how much range of movement he had when he’d leaped off the bed, he was pretty sure he’d torn some cloth or ripped some stitches somewhere along the way.

Wade looked relieved, but Peter thought he could spot a hint of disappointment in his expression. “Good. Yeah, good. Glad we didn’t have an awkward drunken hook-up to like, ruin our awesome chemistry. Friend chemistry. Fremistry?”

“Not a real word,” Peter said baldly.

“Spoilsport,” Wade whined. He’d bounced back from his bout of melancholy at attacking Peter fairly quickly, and Peter sort of wanted more answers, like why Wade had people who wanted to kill him, and why Peter seemed to be the first person Wade had talked to about it, based on how much the man had thought it through before speaking, but he didn’t want to send Wade back into that melancholy. There would be other opportunities, and of course there was no guarantee that Wade would even give him a straight answer. (For the billionth time Peter considered that Wade was really the villain in this tale, and that Peter would end up regretting this whole encounter, but it was a fleeting thought and Peter pushed it out of his mind). So instead Peter stretched and turned towards his now over-flowing closet.

He shed his suit jacket as he walked and found that he had indeed torn the stitches in his sleep. “So, husband mine, what are our plans for today?” Peter heard the soft fabric of Wade’s shirt stretch and creak, and came to the conclusion that Wade had shrugged.

“I don’t have much plans in the morning, boo-bear.”

Peter fake gagged. “Boo-bear? Really? That’s repulsive.”

“Baby-boy then.”

“Better, but still not great,” Peter conceded.

“Baby-boy it shall continue, then,” Wade said, and then Peter could hear the sound of shifting from behind him as he rifled through the wardrobe. Peter peered over his shoulder to confirm his assumptions. Yes, Wade had reclined back onto Peter’s bed.

“Plans?” Peter prompted after a moment, as he returned to going through each of his new clothes, trying to find anything that looked even remotely like ‘Peter.’

“Well,” Wade said, “we could eat? Like I said, I don’t have any plans this morning. At, like, five, we have to go downstairs for cocktails and to mingle, and I guess a little before that we should start getting ready. God knows how you can take an hour to put on a suit, but yesterday it was awful!”

“I don’t know how to tie a tie!” Peter defended. “I never learned. I kept trying and trying—”

“Why didn’t you say anything? I’ll just do it *for* you tonight. No worries. Load off my mind.”

“So then what?” Peter asked. “Five o’clock cocktails, and four o’clock getting all fancied up. Do we really have nothing to do until then?”

Wade shrugged. "I'll order us up some Mexican from this little stand I know and we can watch a movie or play a board game or something. Just relax a little."

"Relax," Peter said, with just a tinge of awe-filled desire.

Wade must have recognized it for what it was, because he grinned and rolled off the bed. "You just get dressed and I'll find something on Demand that I'm going to pretend I haven't seen but spoil the ending for you."

Peter bit back a smile, but then returned, once more to his closet. "Get dressed," he muttered, "like it's that easy."

"Sure it is," Wade said, sounding much closer than Peter thought he was. Peter jumped. "Just pull something out and put it on."

Peter rolled his eyes. "It *isn't* that easy. Nothing in here screams 'Peter!' You know? Everything is ostentatious, ridiculously outrageous, or a little on the skimpy side. Not very 'Peter.'"

"You *are* Peter," Wade said, "anything you wear is going to be 'Peter' because you'll be wearing it. Duh!"

Peter rolled his eyes once more, and this time heard Wade leave the room and close the door behind him. "It's really not," Peter disagreed, but he had the faintest hint of a smile playing around his lips, and he didn't over think it when he grabbed a long, thin shirt and a pair of plaid skinny jeans from the closet. He could be outrageous for a few hours if only Wade would be seeing him. An outrageous sort of Peter.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the length of this chapter. I didn't mean for it to be so short. And I meant to update sooner, but you know how it is, working, and then being out of town for a funeral, and then working extra to make up for the time taken off for the funeral. But it's here now! And I'll try to have the next chapter up sooner (I'm banking on President's day to get it up by, so, like, a week) to make up for the extra long delay between the last chapter and this one.

Patron Saint of Overprotective Husbands

Chapter Notes

So remember how I promised to have this out Monday? Anyway, happy Wednesday everybody! Hope you enjoy! Things are starting to heat up a little

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The hotel lounge, which was a separate entity from the hotel bar, but which also had its own bar, was sprawling and dark, in a velvet and satin sort of way. The low-sitting furniture sprawled across the plush carpet in wide winding turns that *implied* curls more than showed them. The ambling couches and mid-calf-high end tables inspired one to lounge and relax, and the sitting areas entwined and curved in such a way that everything could be seen from a single vantage point, and yet still feel private.

Peter had opted to start the evening on Wade's arm, which had the triple effect of keeping him close to the only person he knew (and the only person he knew wasn't somehow the bad guy); keeping his hands busy with Wade, fawning over his arm, touching his shoulder, adjusting his tie, in order to forestall the need to take up any form of alcohol that might be offered him; and keeping Wade's mouth close enough to his ear that Wade could whisper sweet nothings into it without anyone over-hearing. The sweet nothings tended to range anywhere from, "Keep your eye on the bald man with the slouching nose, his escort is carrying a Walther Pk380 in her purse," to "Look at that chick with the green dress. Look at that hair! What was she thinking, a ginger wearing that shade of green? My eyes are offended, Petey, very offended."

Last night had helped, so even though Peter felt stiff in the shoulders and choked by his tie, he didn't let himself tense up. He could be loose and carefree on Wade's arm, play Wade's husband. He could be the ultimate, adoring, arm-candy and not worry a wit what anyone thought of him.

An hour or so after they'd made their way downstairs found Wade and Peter sprawling on a long couch against a back wall. Undercover they may be, but Peter felt just as reassured as Wade no doubt did that no one could surprise them from behind. Wade was slouched low on the couch, his legs splayed wide before him, taking up too much room than was polite. He had a flute of champagne in his hand, and though Peter hadn't seen him yet take a single sip, the liquid was slowly dropping lower and lower in the glass. Peter was lanker, pressed close against Wade's side, one leg crossed over the other, his torso draped against Wade's.

Somewhere along the way Wade had acquired a few talking partners, one of which sat with his wife, sprawled like Wade and Peter were, on a couch opposite but at a 45 degree angle to Wade and Peter's. The wife, while hanging off her husband's arm in a pose very similar to Peter's, obviously had her mind on other things. She hadn't said a single word besides her initial greeting, and seemed lost in thought. Of course, Peter wasn't exactly volunteering any information either. He was arm-candy here. Wade was the one who was doing the work, he just needed a disguise, and in this instance, Peter really was no different from the sapphire tie around Wade's throat, or the golden ring on his finger.

The couple had introduced themselves as Rufus and Poppy Crane.

The other conversation partner that Wade had somehow acquired, was a single woman in a low-

slung scarlet dress who sat on one of the few armchairs in the lounge, one leg crossed high over the other, leaning forward, arms crossed over her knee, in a position obviously intended to show off her assets. Peter wanted to hiss at her, because the entire time the three had been talking (Peter and the wife not counting) she'd been giving Wade pouty-lips and bedroom eyes, and despite them not actually being married, despite Wade having hired Peter less than a week ago, it still felt like Wade was *his*. *His* husband, *his* property, *his* protector, and he wanted to claw the woman's eyes out because who the fuck did she think she was, making goo-goo eyes at *his* man?

Instead of actually maiming the woman, Peter took to running his fingers up and down the side of Wade's arm, and then his chest, slowly, sensually, marking his territory. The woman smirked at him, when she did deign to tear her eyes away from Wade, as if she found his actions immature, puppy-ish in nature, and not worth her time. Peter wanted to web her to a ceiling fan, turn it on, and leave her there for a month and a half.

She'd introduced herself as Hope Van Beek, but Peter had taken to shortening her first name to "Hoe" in his head and he *hoped* (pun-intended) that she would die in a horrible fire the likes of which had not been seen since the death of the Baudelaire parents (Yes, ok, Peter had been re-reading *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Leave him alone about it.) Hoe Van Beek. No, Hoe Van Bitch. Was that too much?

Maybe, Peter decided. Calling her a hoe *and* a bitch seemed like overkill.

She licked her lips and leaned forward a bit. Her boobs were approximately .9 seconds from popping straight out of her dress, and she would not look away from Wade despite how Peter was practically in the man's lap.

Hoe Van Bitch it was.

"So," Hoe said, her husky voice like smoke and whisky and dark paneled wood, "Wayne, darling," (they'd introduced themselves as Wayne and Peter Winston, husbands for just over two years now, and owners of Winston & Co. Ltd. This left Peter feeling peculiarly amateurish, as it was implied by his name that Wade thought he wouldn't have been able to remember a cover name for the rest of the night, and also slightly worried Peter, because if anyone asked anything about what he did for Winston & Co. Ltd. he wouldn't be able to answer because he knew exactly nothing about running a company or being in charge of anything. Which, Peter guessed, was also covered by Wade's insistence that he play as Wade's arm-candy. Peter would never be questioned about running a company, he was just Wade's—*Wayne's* piece of ass,) "do you think you'll be backing Oakes in his next venture? It sounds positively thrilling."

Wade chuckled and wrapped an arm around Peter's shoulders so Peter could lean against Wade's chest. He started playing with one of the buttons of Wade's shirt, popping it open, fastening it again, popping it open. The position he was in wasn't comfortable, one leg crossed over the other so far it crossed Wade's too, his torso scrunched down to allow Wade to comfortably lay an arm over his shoulder, his head against Wade's chest, and an arm halfway across Wade's shoulder. It left him feeling contorted and in need of a good stretch, but it wasn't painful, and he was sure it looked very possessive, so he thought he'd stay like that until they had to move again. Keep the harpy away.

"Do I want to invest in a copper mine in Michigan that ran out of copper two decades ago? Thank you, no. Oakes can throw as much money at it as he wants, I'll be keeping mine in something a little more stable."

Rufus Crane spoke up, obviously miffed that he was being summarily ignored. "I've just bought stock in... oh, what was it daring?" He turned to his wife who, after a brief pause, met his eye.

“Something Darnby has been heckling you about, no doubt,” Poppy Crane said in a sleepy kind of voice.

“Oh yes, Darnby.” Rufus turned back to the conversation, “Darnby has been absolutely adamant that this stock in Hammer Tech is going to give a great return. Three hundred percent, he said, and Darnby’s usually got his finger in things. Ear to the ground. Remember how much he got in for Osborn stocks when he sold right before the, well, crash.” He chortled.

Peter felt suddenly cold. The mention of Osborn bringing unwanted memories of Harry popping back up. He pushed them severely away, and tried to focus once more on clinging to Wade affectionately.

“Hammer tech, though?” Wade asked. “Hammer might be good people, but his tech is so behind Stark’s it’s laughable. I wouldn’t buy a toaster he stamped his name on.”

Hoe’s laughter was breathy and sensual and all around obviously fake. Come on! No one really laughs like that.

“So what do you have *your* eye on, Mr. Winston?” She leaned back against the plush backing of the couch and ran a manicured hand through her lustrous hair. Peter wanted to rip it out.

“Actually I’ve been keeping my eye on some imports from Malaysia. If they buyers keep buying like they are now, I’ll definitely invest. And I think I have some vendors who might be able to sell for even cheaper than the current price.”

Hoe hadn’t moved during Wade’s little speech, hadn’t changed an expression or moved a muscle. Rufus, however, had twitched a little at the start, and now that Wade had finished, scooched forward a little and placed a hand on Poppy’s shoulder. He was trying very hard to make it look natural, and perhaps that is why it felt so wrong.

“Poppy, dear, would you mind getting me another glass of champagne? I can hardly gab business without a drink in my hand.”

Poppy got up without a word, her expression so mild it was almost blank.

“Drinks all around!” Wade agreed boisterously. He let go of Peter, pushing him up and away, and Peter met his eyes, as he stood, knowing that he looked as confused as he felt. “Go with Poppy, Peter, and get us all another glass. Hmmm, Poppy and Peter, I like the sound of that.”

“You would like that alliteration, wouldn’t you, Wayne Winston?” Hoe asked. She uncrossed her legs, and shifted so Wade would see her at an angle, and was that the lace of a bra peaking out of the top of her dress? Peter was going to throw her out a window.

“All the time,” Wade said, sounding flamboyant and happy. “That’s why I chose Peter in the first place. Peter Patrick Preston. I goddamn swooned. Of course, nowadays I like the sound of Peter Patrick Winston much better, don’t I darling?” He turned to Peter with a comfortable smile, and with the eye that only Peter could see from the positions everyone was sitting at, winked.

Peter tried to smile as well, and he thought he succeeded. He hoped it wasn’t too obvious how much he did not like leaving Wade with these people.

“Off you go, little children,” Hoe said with a tinkling laugh, and honestly. Peter couldn’t believe he was able to *not* body slam her to the ground. Children indeed.

With a slight stiffness, Peter held out his arm for Poppy, and with a similar stiffness, she took it,

and in an awkward silence they made their way towards the bar. Peter didn't know what to say. He wanted to say *something*, what with the awkward silence that was growing there, between these two trophy spouses who had both just been ousted by their husbands from the cool kids group. But what do you say to someone like you, but nothing like you? Because she really *was* married to that guy, Rufus Crane, who was doing something so shady he didn't even want his wife in on it, and Peter was just a stand in.

They reached the bar without having said a single word to each other. Peter glanced at Poppy, and was about to decide again, that she was obviously oblivious to what was happening around her, her expression one of mild boredom, when he saw a tightness around the corners of her eyes. She affected an air of apathy, but just the tiniest micro expression and Peter realized that she was not pleased at all to be there.

Boldened by that glimpse Peter turned to her with a welcoming smile on his face. "I don't believe we ever actually introduced ourselves. I'm Peter Winston." He held his hand out and she shook it with a little laugh.

"Poppy Crane. Pleased to meet you."

"I was afraid," Peter said, "that I'd be the only one uncomfortable here. I'm glad that you, if you don't mind me saying so, seem just as out of sorts."

She gave him a narrow look, and he realized with a start that she was pretty. He hadn't realized until she'd started emoting. Before all she'd looked like was bored. Now she looked alive. "I'm not uncomfortable around my husband, if that's what you're implying."

"No," Peter said, quick to correct the miscommunication, "just bored. You looked real bored back there, and to tell you the truth, I'm not much interested in half the stuff Wa--" wrong wrong wrong, fix "--yne does for work."

"So you only own the company together in name?"

Peter shrugged. Is that how that worked? Sure, whatever.

"Well I at least know what my husband talks about when he talks business," Poppy bragged.

"But you don't care," Peter guessed.

"Not a whit, Peter dear. It's all so boring. Business management was never my passion."

"Then what *is* your passion?" Peter asked.

She grinned a shark's grin, wide and all teeth. "I'm a scientist, Mr. Winston. I research human capability and its possible expansion."

Peter bit his tongue before he could say he was a scientist too. He didn't need anyone trying to find him in the scientific community. And besides, it hurt too much. He doubted that he had much science in his future. Homeless, jobless youths hardly had the chance for scientific research. Unless, of course, they were the ones being studied in the experiment.

"Eugenics?" Peter asked the woman, succeeding in keeping any emotion from slipping into his voice.

She shrugged a little and turned so she could gesture to a bartender. "That's a word for it, though my study has less to do with breeding and more to do with, well, making."

That sounded a little maniacal for Peter's tastes, but that, he supposed, was why Wade was here in the first place. It wasn't like Wade was trying to invade the girl scouts. These guys were some really bad dudes, and Peter felt silly for thinking that just because Poppy was bored by business talk she was somehow exempt from, well, being a bad guy.

Did Wade know? Had he sent Peter off in order to glean some information from Poppy?

Peter turned an ear to where Wade was talking with Rufus and Hoe. They were still talking about importing something from Malaysia, but they were using some sort of code, so Peter didn't know exactly what they were up to. Wade had no way of knowing Poppy Crane would say something as potentially worrying as her being a scientist of eugenics (which coupled with the whole bad guy schtick could rack up to be really dangerous). And Peter didn't really think that Wade would send him off to work on his espionage either. He'd been very adamant that Peter was to stay safe no matter what and not get himself involved. From the few days they'd known each other (it felt like a lifetime) Peter knew that Wade wasn't the kind of person to manipulate and sneak. If he'd wanted Peter to play spy, he would have said something. He hadn't said anything, therefore he hadn't wanted Peter involved.

That didn't mean that *Peter* was just going to roll over and play nice. He might be living on the streets, and he might not have been able to go out crime-stopping since Aunt May's—since Aunt May, but this was still his city.

"I'm probably not as smart as you," Peter said to Poppy with a conspiratorial smile on his face, "and I probably won't be able to follow half what you say, but I am *intrigued*. Human perfection is...well, something to work towards, right? Something to aspire to create." He sighed and hoped it wasn't too hammy.

She practically lit up.

The next hour and fifteen minutes had Peter and Poppy sitting, five glasses of champagne between them, with Poppy telling Peter every excruciating detail about her plans in creating a master race of humans, of people who could go longer and harder and not get tired. She kept referring to Captain America as a failed experiment, and it was really starting to creep Peter out. Sometimes she slipped from "I" to "we" which made Peter think that maybe this whole thing was bigger than just Poppy and her aspirations. It gave Peter the chills. Peter pushed glass after glass of champagne at Poppy, hoping it might expand her willingness to spill details, and she ended up finishing the glasses of champagne they'd gotten for the others. Peter's face hurt from keeping up a placid smile when all he wanted to do was scream at her and call the police.

"But enough about me," she said finally, after having explained a chemical formula she was working on that would eliminate the need for sleep in a human body, "what about you?"

Peter blinked. He'd forgotten this had been a two way conversation and not just a weird TED talk on taking over the world. "Me?" he asked calmly while a mild hint of panic trickled into his mind.

She laughed, and it was the tinkling of broken crystal. "Yes! Surely you must do something. You obviously don't help your husband in his business ventures any more than I help mine. So what *do* you do with your time?"

Peter wracked his brain for something a trophy husband would do in his leisure time that Peter would actually be able to talk about at any length. Water polo and owning yachts were his first thoughts, but he knew nothing about horses or sailing or boats or water or anything so those were right out. He couldn't say science, having burned that bridge, and he couldn't say being a prostitute, because that was neither true nor untrue and wouldn't help either way.

“Photography,” he realized, as it was coming out of his mouth.

She looked interested in a curious sort of way. This was obviously not what she was expecting. “Really? Like bowls of fruit, or black and white high contrast shots of lawn chairs, or what?”

Peter laughed. “Not quite. I’m not big into still lifes.”

“Then what do you take pictures of?” she asked like she could think of no other answers.

Peter discarded, “Superheroes” just as fast as he discarded, “myself.” “People,” he finally decided on. “I like taking pictures of people.”

“Portraits,” she said, as if that was an answer she could get behind.

Peter frowned. “No, those are too stiff, too posed. I like,” he thrust his hand out palm up and clutched at nothing, grasping and rolling the air around between his fingers, “the texture of life. I want pictures of the real things. Of real people living actual lives. I want to see them as they are, not gussied up and strutted before me like a hog at a town fair.”

Poppy made a face and gestured subtly at the examples of powdery entitlement that surround them. “What, do you follow Wayne to work and take photos of his conferences? Secretaries? Do you take unobtrusive photos of the races? Of boat outings? Of those strip club meetings our husbands think we don’t know about?”

Peter laughed. “I’d do the last one, maybe not the rest.”

Poppy raised her eyebrows, an obvious question.

“Well,” Peter defended himself half-heartedly, “that would be real, wouldn’t it? No matter what people like our husbands say about meeting at places like that being just business deals, or ways to get the other side feeling easier to persuade, it’s still a strip club. They aren’t going to the strip club because the drinks are cheaper or tastier, and they aren’t going to the strip clubs just because the other guys want to go. They know we know they’re going to the strip clubs, yet they still try to sell it like it’s not for any nefarious reason. They don’t even try to explain why stripping isn’t a bad profession, or just outright admit they like seeing naked women’s bodies. They are ashamed, Mrs. Crane, and yet they still go. I want to see that. I want to capture it.”

She looked at him with an expression somewhere between impressed and...something. Indulgence or disgust but really neither of those. She looked at Peter like an adult would look at a child when the child was bragging about something particularly immature or foolish. Pleased, the parent would be at their child’s confidence, proud, but also embarrassed for their child who was saying something particularly stupid and was too young to realize it and be embarrassed in their own right. She looked at Peter like she was taking on his embarrassment till he’d realized what he said and could take it upon himself and look back on his words with regret and humiliation.

Peter didn’t feel particularly humiliated, or ashamed. He did not regret his words. He didn’t think he’d ever be embarrassed about what he’d said. But maybe he would someday, many days from now, and he could remember Poppy Crane, the crazy eugenics scientist with ideas of grandeur, and realize she’d been right to look at him like that.

He doubted it.

He was so caught up in his internal defense of her expression that her next words caught him completely by surprise. “Does that mean you want a picture of pretty little Hope Van Beek fawning over your husband like a bird of prey looking for her next meal?”

Peter balked. He sputtered. He hacked out a glob of spit he'd accidentally inhaled in shock.

Poppy tittered away. "Not so pleasant a thought, is it? And she's a beauty she is, all curves and skin and that shade of lipstick that would look clownish on anyone else. Any spouse would be jealous if they found their husband on the receiving end of her seduction. No need to be coy."

Peter harrumphed. "I'm that obvious then?"

"Darling, you were practically in Wayne's lap. I thought for sure you'd start dry-humping him any second there."

Peter covered his face in mortification.

"Or piss on him to mark your territory," she said with obvious glee.

Peter wondered if the red glow of his face was visible through his fingers. "Oh my god. Stop."

"You looked like you wanted to strike her down where she stood. Or, where she lounged seductively, making bedroom eyes at your hubby."

Peter sighed out and finally lifted his face out of his hands. "That at least is true."

"What's true?" Wade's voice asked from close behind Peter and he jumped a little in surprise.

He sent a last little glare at Poppy before turning to Wade with a smile. "Hi, honey. You made me jump. Don't sneak up on a guy like that."

Wade stepped closer and pressed a kiss to Peter's temple, giving Peter ample time to see that behind Wade, Rufus Crane was talking to his wife. Hoe was nowhere to be seen. Peter smiled. "Sorry snuggle-bunny," Wade said. "What took you so long? I swear I sent you off for drinks two hours ago, and there are still no drinks."

Peter glanced at his watch and was surprised that Wade was right. They'd been chatting so heatedly and somewhere along the way it'd gotten late. "We drank the drinks," Peter said absentmindedly.

"All of them?" Wade asked. He looked between Poppy and Peter and gave a little nervous smile. "What were you two chatting about that was more important than little ol' me?"

"But that's just what we *were* talking about," Poppy interjected, her voice cool and collected, and it made Peter realize how animated her voice *had* been when it was just the two of them. She'd let go, and he hadn't even noticed till her walls were back up.

"Gossiping about our husbands," Peter agreed, thinking that dishing about the chick's obsession with the perfect human could wait until he and Wade were alone.

Wade gave them an uneasy grin. "Nothing too horrid, I hope."

Peter patted his arm consolingly. "Of course not."

"As long as you don't take a peek at Hope Van Beek when Peter's not around," Poppy said with a cool little smile.

"Poppy," Peter said, aghast, and swiped at her arm playfully. She laughed. Because apparently they'd reached that level of friendship in the last two hours of conversation.

Wade relaxed a little, and when he turned to Peter it was with his lids half closed. He took Peter's hand and brought it up to his lips in order to graze a kiss along Peter's knuckles. Peter's heart picked up and he was honestly 3 seconds from swooning. "Is that it? Just Hope? She's not nearly as hot as you, sweet thing."

Peter could feel his cheeks growing warm, and even as he tried to mimic Poppy's cool tone, he knew it was for naught as long as Wade was looking at his face. Which he was. "I bet you say that to all your trophy husbands."

Wade hummed. "I'll endeavor to," he said slyly, "from now on, if you ever divorce my sorry ass that is. Otherwise I'll have to keep calling *you* sweet forever."

There. Yep. Peter was swooning.

(*Fake husbands. Fake.* He needed to remember that.)

"Well as much as I'm sure we loved meeting you," Rufus Crane started to say, sounding slightly stilted and off-put, "it's getting late and we probably need to head up to bed."

Poppy's face was back to being bored, and it split for half a second when she met Peter's eyes, but then the moment passed.

"See you tomorrow at the gala?" Wade asked politely.

"Of course, Wayne. I know I can always wrangle a good conversation out of you." Peter reached out to take Poppy's hand the same time Rufus leaned into Wade to give him one of those bro hugs that guys do to be masculine, and he heard, so quietly that only because of his powers was he able to hear it at all, Rufus whisper "Hail Hydra" into Wade's ear.

Peter's blood ran cold.

"Hail Hydra," Wade returned, and then they released each other from the super hetero bro hug of not gayness™. Peter tried desperately not to let any emotions show on his face. He thought he succeeded because Poppy didn't look like she'd noticed something odd.

"Bye Peter," Poppy said, was saying, "we'll have to chat again tomorrow."

"Of course," Peter said, "I'm looking forward to it."

And they split off. Poppy and Rufus made straight for the exit, and Peter realized that the lounge had pretty much emptied out. There were a few stragglers, a few who'd gotten drunk, and a few who were still too sober, but mostly everyone had already headed out for the evening.

"Ready to go to sleep, Petey-Pie?" Wade asked, placing a warm hand on the small of Peter's back.

Peter was ready to have a talk about evil organizations and neo-nazis with his fake husband, that's what Peter was ready to do. "Let's go upstairs," Peter compromised.

Wade curled his arm over Peter's shoulders, and despite Peter's internal screaming and distrust of any fucking thing having to do with fucking Hydra, he relaxed into it. Wade was warm, and self-proclaimed anti-these people, so anti-Hydra, and that was ok in Peter's books.

They strolled casually through the lounge, coasting around the edges of the little curving nooks of couches and armchairs, curling through the room. Suddenly an arm shot out and snagged Peter's elbow, stalling their progress through the lounge.

Peter could see Wade's metaphorical hackles raise, and his own shoulders tensed. Had someone found them out somehow? Did someone somehow know that they weren't really married? That they were undercover? Did—did—did...

Peter looked at the person, saw a middle-aged man, slightly balding, in a suit too well-fit to his beer-gut. Peter had never seen the man in his life.

"Do I know you?" The man asked. He squinted, leaned forward, and squeezed Peter's arm in a tighter grip that made goosebumps shoot up it.

"No," Peter said with certainty, "you don't look familiar at all."

"I know I know you," the man reiterated, and despite seeming steady on his feet, Peter wondered if he was drunk. "I know I've seen you somewhere."

"Remove your hand from my husband," Wade growled, and it was steady and cold and Peter did not doubt in that moment that Wade had killed people.

The man let go immediately, and Peter's hand dropped to his side. He squinted harder at Peter, squinted at Wade. "Husband?" he asked.

"Yes," Wade snapped, and didn't even wait for a response before steering Peter from the room and into the closest elevator.

He leaned against the golden bar that wrapped around the cube and Peter could see that he was breathing hard, like he'd just done the work-out of his life, or he was trying very hard not to commit murder.

"I didn't know him," Peter reiterated. His brow was furrowed in confusion, because he'd honestly never seen the man before in his life.

Wade turned wild eyes to Peter. "Next man to touch you loses his hand."

Peter put a soothing hand on Wade's shoulder. "You're going to be ok."

Wade squeezed his eyes shut. "I'm not going to be ok if I have a goddamned panic attack every time someone grabs you."

"Especially considering my line of work," Peter said off-handedly. There was something about being a prostitute (a very bad prostitute who had yet to have the sex for money transaction thing happen) that let Peter poke and prod in ways he normally wouldn't.

Wade's eyes, if possible, went wilder. "You have to qu—" he cut himself off, took a deep breath, and tried again. "I don't want that to ever happen to you."

"You're sweet," Peter said.

The elevator dinged, the doors opened, and Peter took Wade's hand to lead him out into the hall. He dragged Wade to their room, watched as he swiped the door unlocked, opened the door, and when the door was closed again, he pressed Wade back against the wall. He was breathing more easily, Peter noticed, and he wasn't looking as frenzied, his eyes were more focused, and his breathing had leveled out.

"Feeling better?" Peter asked, and let a hand rest on the center of Wade's chest.

“Yes,” Wade breathed out. “Yes, yes I’m good. I’m sorry, I’m sorry if I—I—scared you? I’m sorry...”

“Don’t be sorry, at least not about that. You were being protective. It wasn’t exactly an instinct I’m going to disagree with. And you’re feeling better?”

“Yes,” Wade repeated, slowly, more sure of himself. “Yeah, I feel fine now. Thanks.”

“Good,” Peter said briskly. He stepped away from Wade, away from the door, not wanting to box the man in. “Good, good. Then can we talk about why we were just mingling with Hydra Operatives?”

Chapter End Notes

I would have finished writing this Monday, really, but they were playing Detective Chinatown 2 in theaters for the Lunar New Year, so my friend and I spent presidents day watching first one at home and then seeing the sequel in theaters and it was hilarious! So I was like, I'll do it Tuesday, but yesterday was my roommate's birthday so I got her shark slippers and we went out for German food. So Wednesday it is. But seriously, go watch Detective Chinatown. It's hilarious!

Patron Saint of Truth

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What?” Wade gasped out. “How did you know? No, wait, I mean, what are you talking about?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “Hydra, Wade. Those people down there were Hydra! Well, I don’t know if all of them were, but I can pick up on context clues, my dude. A little ‘Hail Hydra’ here, a little ‘Hail Hydra’ there and you’ve got a friggin Hydra cell setting up shop in the ritziest hotel I’ve ever seen, and I’m counting the hotel from Home Alone 2: Lost in New York, which is, don’t you know, also in New York.”

He stared at Wade who stared back, wide-eyed and mouth opened in shock and not looking to be changing any time soon. Finally, Wade seemed to gather enough brain cells together to respond, but it wasn’t what Peter would have expected him to say.

“Well of course the Hotel is ritzy,” he said with a playful scoff despite how wide his eyes still were. “Would you expect Hydra Operatives to do a meet-and-greet in a Motel 6? Or rent out a high school gymnasium? These are premium level baddies, Peter, they ain’t no rinky-dink, run-of-the-mill criminals. They’re straight-up villains. Of course they chose to have a gala in the fanciest hotel they could get their grubby little hands on.”

Peter glared at Wade. “My point wasn’t exactly that they shouldn’t be in this hotel. I mean, they shouldn’t, because assholes bent on world domination or whatever shouldn’t get to sleep on a bed, let alone a silk one. But my *point* was that, I’m sorry, have we just been mingling with *fucking Hydra*?”

Wade pressed his lips together into a thin line and nodded.

“Cool. Cool cool cool. We’re totally going to get murdered in our sleep. Nice.”

“How do you even *know* Hydra?” Wade asked. “Do you, like, work for them?” He didn’t look too convinced, but Peter still sputtered.

“*Work* for them? You think I want to have anything to *do* with them? I want to flee the building! I want to call the police or SHIELD or the Avengers or someone important and have them take care of this. This, this is bad. This is way above my head. This is above my pay grade.”

“I’m actually paying you way more than the going rate for like, anything,” Wade pointed out. “I don’t think even the Avengers make a million in a week.”

“Five days,” Peter corrected.

Wade rolled his eyes. “And I have no idea how you even *know* about Hydra, but I can take care of it. Like I said, this is just an info-gathering mission. No one even knows we’re not who we say we are. We’re completely safe.”

“I’m going to call the police,” Peter said, and turned towards the phone which sat on a desk by the window.

“No! No, no, definitely don’t do that.” Wade scrambled after Peter and caught him about the waist before he could get more than a few feet away. Peter could have broken out of his grip easily but

he didn't. He let himself be held, be pulled upward by Wade's strength until his toes were just barely skimming the carpet. He wanted to hear what Wade was going to say. Hydra being involved made this whole venture three thousand times more dangerous and there was a pretty high likelihood that Wade was in way over his head. Amateurs had no place messing with Hydra, and neither did Peter for that matter, though he couldn't possibly consider himself an amateur.

"The police can take care of anything here, better than either of us could. We're *civilians*, Wade. We don't know how to properly handle...well, *any* of this! The police can...can, I don't know, arrest the bad guys. I'm sure a lot of these guys are wanted for one thing or another! And they're probably working on some way of taking over the earth or destroying life as we know it or whatever they're doing." Peter paused, just long enough to draw another breath. Then he said, in his most skeptical voice, "Unless you think this gala thing is just a get-together. A reunion of evil, or something."

Wade's grip on Peter's middle tightened and he swung the man around so they were both facing away from the phone. "I know what I'm doing Pete. And you're right, this isn't just a get-together, but it isn't a doomsday party either. I'm here to collect information, which I will then hand off to some sonovabitches smarter than me. But I *am* a professional, and I know what I'm doing, and my promise stays the same. I will protect you if anything happens, and you will walk away from this unscathed and a much richer man."

Peter squirmed a little and Wade let go. He fell the inch to the ground with grace, spun on the ball of his foot, too languid and steady for being just a civilian himself, and looked Wade in the eye. It was like everything else he'd ever seen on the man's face. Wade looked honest and genuinely concerned, and despite the feeling of edgelessness that looking at Wade's face always gave him, Peter believed what he said.

"I still think we should leave this to the professionals," Peter said, not sounding nearly as confident as he had before he got a good look at Wade's face.

Wade rolled his eyes. Heavily. "I *am* the professionals."

Peter glanced down at Wade with obvious skepticism. "Mmm-hmm. Sure you are. Or you're just a guy with a rap sheet and ideas of grandeur in way over his head. And you brought a prostitute. As your plus one."

"I *am* a professional." Wade insisted. "Listen, it's really better if I don't tell you who I am or why exactly I'm here, but I promise, I know what I'm doing."

Peter let that sink in for moment, and then shook his head. "No. I'm sure you *think* you know what you're doing, or that you're able to handle an evil organization that even Captain America couldn't take down, but you're fucking wrong, and I'm going to call the police and tell them to call the Avengers and get *their* asses down here to deal with this. Whatever it is."

Wade threw up his hands. "Oh my god. Peter! Why won't you just trust me when I say I've got everything covered?"

"Oh, I don't know," Peter retorted, bitingly sarcastic, "maybe it's because this entire event seems like hodge-podge, mismatched, patchwork quilt of ideas you sewed together after everything else fell through, and I get this eerie feeling that every other plan you have is *also* going to fall through, and someone is going to discover that you *aren't* on the side of evil and it'll get us both killed. And I don't know about *you*, Wade, but I don't feel like getting murdered today."

"You're not going to get murdered," Wade snapped, sounding positively exasperated. "Listen.

Peter. Petey. Petey-pie. I promise, you will not get hurt or injured in any way. I will protect you with my life. And they won't find out we aren't three-hundred percent villains. We are air-tight, my dude. It'll be fine."

Peter examined Wade's face, and then looked down at his fingernails. He buffed them against his shirt, examined them again. "Ok, sure," Peter said to his fingernails, and then looked up into Wade's eyes with determination. "I'm going to go find out a way to contact the Avengers about this."

Wade let out a small scream. A tiny one. Obviously just a verbal expression of frustration.

Peter could relate.

"I'm going to explode," Wade said, almost conversationally. "Do not call the police. Stop trying to contact the Avengers. Why won't you *trust* me when I say I've got a handle on this?"

"We're going to die," Peter muttered to himself and pinched the bridge of his nose as he turned slightly away from the man. Wade was wrong. Peter *did* believe that Wade thought he was fine. *Thought* being the operative word. Wade was positive he could take on whatever he was up against, and Peter knew that Wade really believed that. But Peter was also pretty sure that Wade didn't realize how fucked up they were and how bad Hydra was and how much this was such a death sentence and honestly was this even worth the money?

Wade growled "We. Are *not*. Going to die. Ugh! Get it through your thick skull!"

"Well prove it!" Peter snapped, knowing that that was a ridiculous request. How can you prove something bad *isn't* going to happen?

Peter didn't care.

"Fine! Want to know why I'm here? Why I'm *positive* I know what the fuck I'm doing, Petey-Pie? It's because I'm one of the good guys. And as much as you seem to want to call in the Avengers and wrap all this up in a pretty little bow, you've been beaten to the punch. The Avengers *were* called in about this little shindig, and instead of wasting time and effort trying to make a big deal out of it, trying to somehow disguise themselves when everyone who owns a tv knows what they look like, they brought in me. Because I'm a fucking professional, and I get shit done."

That stopped Peter in his tracks. The Avengers, they were a big deal. They were the top dogs in New York (no matter how much the Fantastic Four liked to think they were on top, they left the city for outer space too often to keep their place), and if Wade really had been hired by the Avengers than he was probably a big deal too. They didn't waste time with small fish (like Peter), and yet, and yet Peter had never heard of Wade before. He didn't look familiar, and Peter was sure (almost sure) that he'd recognize anyone the Avengers worked with, even on a sort-of freelance basis.

"The Avengers? Captain America, Iron Man, Black Widow? That gang?"

Wade nodded.

Peter scrunched up his eyes, trying to make Wade's face look familiar. "You're not lying to me?"

Wade rolled his eyes. "Why would I be lying to you?"

"I can think of several reasons."

“Well, I’m not,” Wade said. “I was brought in by Captain America himself due to my expertise in handling these sorts of people.” He preened, and Peter’s mouth curled involuntarily into a smile.

“And your expertise is...”

“Killing,” Wade said simply, “but like I told you, I don’t really do that anymore. But I still have the contacts, and I can still hold my own in *frantic situations*.” He pronounced the last two words melodramatically, making them sound almost lewd, which was just ridiculous.

Peter ignored the killing remark. He would have liked to have commented on it, but Wade was right, they’d already talked about it, and Peter could understand why his old skills in *murder* might be helpful with Hydra. Peter didn’t like the thought of death, of killing anyone, but Hydra was vicious, and was murderous itself, and Peter wasn’t about to gad around telling people to refrain from *protecting themselves* when Hydra was involved. Especially when Peter was also involved.

“I don’t recognize you,” Peter said in response instead. “I’m not saying I know the faces of everyone who interact with the Avengers, but I do—” (*What are you going to say, Parker? He asked the part of his brain that made his mouth make words before his brain finished thinking, You’re ‘I’m a photographer for the Bugle’ excuse got blasted out of the water when you became a prostitute.*) “—I see a lot of people in my line of work,” Peter finished lamely, and then wanted to slap himself because that just implied that he’d slept with one or more of the Avengers for money! Or that he was sleeping with the people *around* the Avengers, for money. And oh my god, if anyone ever found out that he’d just practically *insinuated* that he knew a lot of the hero community due to his work in *prostitution* he would absolutely die of mortification.

Wade gave him a very strange look. “Your line of—”

“The point,” Peter said loudly, talking over the end of Wade’s question, “is that I’ve never seen your face before, or even heard your name. And I don’t think the Avengers would hire a complete unknown for something as serious as Hydra. Who are you, Wade Wilson?”

Wade pursed his lips. “Of course, most people know me by a different name.”

“Oh yeah?” Peter asked. “What’s that?”

“Deadpool.”

“Bullshit!” Peter said immediately, not even realizing the word was leaving his mouth until it was floating there between them.

Wade raised his eyebrows. “No. It’s pronounced Dead-pool.”

Peter had never really interacted with Deadpool. They’d met in passing, but Deadpool had always seemed a little too *there* for Peter to strike up anything but small talk. The man had a reputation for talking the ear off anyone who came within ten yards of him, but with Peter—no, with *Spiderman* he’d been suspiciously silent and unexpressive behind his mask and it had been sincerely off-putting. Peter wondered if that’s what *he* looked like to other people: creepy and enough like a faceless entity to feel less than, or more than, human.

But Wade talked a lot. Wade talked constantly, and he said he had a—a—like, a hero-worship thing happening for Spiderman and—Oh my god! That’s why he’d never spoken to Peter as *Spiderman*. He was *fanboying*! That is, if this was Deadpool. Peter had been so deep in pulling out theories that he hadn’t at first thought to *question* Wade’s statement. But, there was something about Deadpool he *did* know. No, he’d never learned the guy’s real name, despite it not being

nearly the secret Peter's name was, and no, he'd never actually *seen* Deadpool's face without the mask, but he'd heard things. Stories about the thick ropes of scars that covered the man's body, the thick ridges that stood in outline crisscrossing and winding around him, covering every inch of skin.

And Wade's face was smooth and unblemished and he was a *fucking liar*.

"You're a fucking liar," Peter said smoothly. It felt smooth anyway, and Peter felt a small pinch of satisfaction (followed by a bigger pinch of regret that Peter refused to acknowledge) when he saw Wade's mouth drop open.

"Liar," Wade repeated loudly, in a strangled voice.

"Don't sound so offended," Peter said and crossed his arms. It was a laughable barrier between the two of them, but Peter needed even just the illusion of separation. The fact that Wade lied to him bit into him like a blister. He *knew* that Wade wasn't telling him the whole truth, Wade had said it himself, and they obviously weren't bosom buddies. There was no reason to expect Wade to tell him everything. And Peter didn't expect *that*, not really, not when he had a whole host of issues and secrets himself, but he didn't expect Wade to outright *lie* to him, to tell Peter he was *Deadpool* of all people. It was a useless and unnecessary lie, and Peter couldn't understand why he would lie except to get Peter to shut up about calling the police (which he would be doing any second now, thank you very much). This even felt worse than the omission about Hydra being involved, because at least that was explainable. Wade wanted to keep Peter safe and secure, and from running away, by keeping terrifying information away from him; information that Peter Parker, prostitute, should not have even understood. And Peter understood all the misleading Wade did to get him into the hotel. And maybe Peter shouldn't be too offended by this lie, but telling Peter he was a super when he *wasn't* hit too close to home. Maybe it wouldn't have hurt so much if Peter wasn't Spiderman. A lamed and broken Spiderman who had been out of the game too long.

"I *am* offended!" Wade said with just a hint of snarl. "I tell you who I am, because you're *flipping your lid*—"

"I wasn't flipping my lid," Peter interrupted, offended, but Wade didn't even pause to listen.

"—which is a stupid idea in the 'Keep Peter from Dying' Plan. I tell you who I am in the hopes that that will at least calm you the fuck down long enough for me to convince you that I *can* fucking protect you! I *have* the know-how! And you blow it all out of the water, calling me a liar. When the fuck have I ever, and I mean *ever*, lied to you?" Wade let out an exasperated breath that was so loud it was almost a shout. "I'm not in the habit of lying, Peter," he said in a normal speaking voice. "I will tell you if I can't give you the information you want, and maybe I'll never give you the information, but I won't lie. And I *haven't* lied." He ran a hand down his face. "Jesus, Pete! You *obviously* recognize the name. I *am* Deadpool. Merc-with-a-Mouth, at your service. What more do you want?"

"I want you to stop lying," Peter said. "I know you must be saying this for a good reason, cuz you're a good guy, I can tell, but you aren't fucking Deadpool. I know what Deadpool looks like, and you aren't him."

Wade scoffed. "Do you mean the red and black mask? 'Cause that's hanging in my fancy shmancy wardrobe-armoire-thing and I can go get it out for you if that's what it take to convince you."

"No, not the mask. Not the costume either, or the katanas, or the guns. In fact, definitely don't bring out any katanas and guns, I don't need to have a heart attack on top of everything else. I mean your *face*."

“What about my face?” Wade snapped back.

“It’s smooth,” Peter practically hissed. “Your face is conventionally attractive without a single mark or scar, you motherfucker, and I might not have ever seen Deadpool, let alone with his mask off, but I know for a goddamned fact that the man has more scars on his little toe than you have on your entire body.”

Wade’s face did something complicated, and then it cleared. “Oh,” he said, his voice light, “I’d completely forgotten I was wearing this.” He started picking at the corner of his jaw, right below his ear. “Of course, I think *my* face-changer was more comprehensive, but this one lasts longer and it’s lighter, and it’s insured by SHIELD which is more than I can say about anything else I own so I can be as tough with it—” Wade’s fingers, working at his skin, created something that looked like a tear, and Peter’s heart jumped into his throat for a second before he realized the tear was a static-y blue, and then Wade’s whole face seemed to short-circuit, and then Wade was peeling away something blue, translucent, and static-y from his face, revealing...well, what Peter imagined Deadpool must look like beneath the mask. He was bald, and his head and face were covered with interwoven scars, ridges upon ridges that cast shadows on his face in a jumble of patterns and shapes.

“Holy shit,” Peter said beneath his breath.

Wade winced. “Yeah, it’s not really much to look at, right? Only a face a mother could love. Of ‘course *my* mother didn’t, and no one else has what with the wife and then the not wife, and it’s pretty disgusting, so now that this proves that I am who I say I am I’ll just put this back on.”

He lifted the mask (which looked more like a wad of cloth, if cloth was made of pure electricity) and motioned as if he was going to put it back on his face, but Peter took a step forward and stopped his movement by grabbing his wrist. Wade jerked back, but instead of focusing on Wade’s face and the rictus of scars, Peter made a grab for the electric mask. Wade let it slip through his fingers.

Peter held the cloth up to the light to try and see it better. On closer inspection it was a finely woven material of the thinnest wires Peter had ever seen. “What *is* this?” he breathed.

“Uhhh,” Wade took a second to figure out that Peter’s attention had been diverted completely to the mask. “It’s a, a photostatic veil? Or, I mean, the cooler name is Nano Mask, but that makes it seem like it’s a tiny little mask,” his voice pitched higher at the word tiny, and he held his fingers a centimeter apart.

“Nano tech,” Peter murmured almost reverentially.

“Well, maybe?” Wade asked. He shrugged. “I just take what I’m given. I don’t really stick around to ask what the *science* is behind it.

“So maybe the nanotechnology in the photostatic veil changes the refraction of light to create an illusion that would allow a change of perception?” Peter didn’t seem to even have heard Wade. He was pooling the cloth back and forth in his hands. “And that could be a disguise? But that, that’s bizarre! To—to change the face completely, to cover all of your scars, and the very contours of your face! I mean, your face’s geography! That’s--that’s gnarly!”

“My face is gnarled,” Wade agreed.

Peter rolled his eyes. “That’s not what I meant and you know it! But for the reflectors to be small enough for the cloth to be malleable still, and yet work at different angles. Mirrors? It would have

to trick the human eye into seeing wavelengths that don't actually currently exist!" He petted the cloth until Wade snatched it away from him.

"The *tech* isn't the issue," Wade said. "Stop going on tangents. What kind of sex worker are you anyway?" Wade asked brusquely. "Did you get an engineering degree or—or some sciencey shit, and then decide there was more money in sleeping with men?" He scrunched up his nose, and Peter watched as the ridges of scars pulled around his face. "Or women. I'm not discriminating." He scrunched his nose up again. "People. Sleeping with people."

Peter rolled his eyes. "Then what *is* the issue?"

Wade widened his eyes and made a gesture down his body.

"Which reminds me," Peter said, "your hands didn't appear scarred either."

Wade waved that away. "Photostatic-Nano mitten/gloves. Stop—stop *ignoring* my face."

Peter frowned. "I'm not ignoring your face."

"Yes you are! You should be revolted by it. Running and screaming. There's a reason I wear a mask, you know, this one," he pointed to mask in Peter's hands, "and my other one."

"I'm not scared of your scars, Wade," Peter said easily. Everything was light again. It was easier to breath, and easier to move, and Peter didn't think he should have been that happy just to learn that Wade *hadn't* been lying to him. The fact that Wade was actually Deadpool also made Peter feel a lot better about the whole Hydra thing. Maybe they *wouldn't* get captured and murdered after all.

"Well you should be," Wade muttered.

"But I'm not," Peter repeated, "And more importantly, you're Deadpool."

Wade's expression brightened a little. "So you believe me?"

"Yes," Peter said. "Now tell me why the Avengers sent you to infiltrate a Hydra Party."

"Well they sent me because I'm the best," Wade stuck out his chest and pounded on it with a fist.

"Now you're just being purposefully obtuse."

Wade let his macho pose drop and he looked at Peter with something that was almost regret. His smile looked too sad. "You know, I really am trying to protect you. I *promised* you I'd protect you, but you make it very hard when you jump right in the middle of everything, wanting to know every detail. Haven't you ever heard, Pete? Ignorance is bliss."

"But knowledge is power," Peter rejoined, "and I know you want to protect me, but I'd feel a lot better knowing exactly what you're protecting me from. Maybe I can even protect myself," he shrugged, "who knows."

Wade pursed his lips.

"Please?" Peter begged, whining just a little.

Wade's shoulders dropped and he let his head hang forward for just a second. "Fine, but this can't change how you act or anything, ok?"

"I can do that," Peter said, and was about 80% sure he was speaking the truth.

Wade narrowed his eyes at Peter, and Peter tried to look confident and innocent and truthful and any other way that would make Wade talk.

Wade folded like a cheap card table. “This gala, the one tomorrow, is really the tamest of Hydra activities. Honestly it’s just a glorified recruitment drive. I mean honestly Pete, these old, white motherfuckers trying to hustle some,” he made air quotes, ““fundraising” and “donations” like it’s not the biggest crock of bull I’ve ever heard. *Fundraising*, yeah right. It’s just glorified theft-murder. But anyway, this here is going to be a big old party where all the hot-shot Hydra fuckers get together to convince other, let’s call them Nazi-inclined idiot jerk-offs, to join their cool gentleman’s club of world domination.”

Peter furrowed his brow. “But you said this was just an info-gathering mission, so unless you were lying, your plan isn’t to *stop* any of these people. What are you doing there?”

Wade tapped his temple with this middle finger. “Never let anyone tell you you aren’t smart shit, Peter. You’re exactly right. I’m not here to go down, guns blazing, taking every one of these stinkin’ piss stains of the universe down with a bullet to the brain.”

Peter thought about this for a second. “I guess I’m glad?” he said with a questioning lilt. “I don’t want you committing more murders than you have to.”

Wade beamed at him.

“But if not murder...” Peter trailed off.

“I’m just info-gathering,” Wade shrugged, “like I said. I’ve got a snazzy little camera and microphone set sewed into my tie, like a motherfucking boss, and I’m here to ask mucho questions, see who knows what, see who’s evil and who just got jumped by the wrong neo-nazis. And then I will give this info to SHIELD and they will tag these people so we can get locations of bases. Because we know people, we have files, but we don’t know where they keep their crazy mad weapons or their crazy madder scientists, or their super unrescuable hostages who totes need to be rescued. So this is like, step one in a fifteen step plan to save the universe or whatever.”

Peter let out a sigh of relief. “Oh. Well, that seems super fucking dangerous, but at least no one will die. Or,” Peter scratched his cheek, “at least the *plan* doesn’t include anyone dying.”

“See?” Wade asked. “Perfectly safe, perfectly thought out, and I’m a perfect professional.” His smile dimmed a little. “Do you still want—do you want to—are you still ok with—?”

“I’ll still help,” Peter said. “Of course I’ll still help.”

“What about the...” he waved his hand haphazardly, “murder and danger and worry of dying thing?”

Peter pressed his lips into a thin line. “You spent so long trying to convince me to help you. Don’t tell me now you want me to scam?”

“No! Of course not!”

Peter laughed. “But you want to make sure that now I know, I’m not going to high-tail it out of here. And I’m not. Hydra is—” he exaggerated a shudder, “bad news, and anything I can do to help, well, I’ll do it.”

“And I’m glad,” Wade said quickly, “I am—yes. Good, that is a good thing, my little Pete. Very good. You just seemed *really* uncomfortable about being near them, like,” he checked his wrist

where a watch would be if he were wearing one, “twenty seconds ago.”

Peter thought about his fear, so present so recently, and now it was nothing but confidence. Wade was Deadpool, and Deadpool had a reputation for getting shit done. Peter was no lightweight either. They’d be able to hold their own, long enough at least to make a break if something bad happened. And Peter didn’t think anything bad *would* happen. He was a good husband—good at *being* a husband. A good husband to Wade. Pretending to, anyway. But they had mad marriage skillz. They were safe.

“I trust you,” Peter said, a simpler explanation, but still the truth.

Wade ducked his head and put a hand to the back of his neck. “So we’re on for tomorrow?”

Peter stepped forward, closer and closer until they were almost chest to chest, and Wade was forced to look up or risk headbutting Peter in the chin. “Yes,” Peter said making sure to catch Wade’s eyes. “I wouldn’t miss it for the world, o’ husband mine.”

And Wade grinned like it was the only thing he’d ever wanted to hear.

Chapter End Notes

How about that? Half of the participants on the Secret Identity Train have disembarked ;)

Patron Saint of Velvet

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter slept in the next morning, a luxury he didn't think he'd ever take for granted again. There wasn't much sleep to be had when the only bed he had was an alley corner or a cracked sidewalk that scraped against his cheeks and palms. What sleep he did get was fitful and more like an extended doze, with always one ear out for any sounds that might mean someone was about to stumble upon him. Late-night party-goers were often drunk, and careless, if not outright cruel. Cops were to be avoided. He didn't tend to stick around if he heard a sound coming towards him in the night, no matter how innocuous it was.

But luxuriating in a Queen-sized bed with the softest sheets and the warmest comforter, and being able to sleep heavily, not having to worry that someone would stumble upon him in the night, it was like strawberries and cream after years of eating nothing but dirt.

Safety felt like heaven.

He was awakened by a knock at the front door sometime after eleven, and let himself stretch and yawn, and listened to make sure Wade was up and would answer the door, before lazily rising from his bed.

He heard muted voices, the rustling of something that Peter couldn't quite place but that could have been a type of cloth or trash bags being unwound from their roll. It made Peter frown. It wasn't a noise that room service would make, or anyone who Peter could imagine would want entry to their hotel room this early in the morning.

And Wade was out there with no back-up, with fucking Hydra operatives running loose in the building.

Not bothering to change out of his red plaid sleep pants or put on a shirt in his hurry, Peter wrenched open his door (almost pulling it off its hinges in the process) and flung himself into the living room, ready to protect Wade or jump at the attacker or throw someone out a window. He instead found himself almost barreling into the tailor he'd gone to...goodness, had it only been three days previous? The man was holding a garment bag and looked completely unsurprised to see Peter practically barrel out of his room. Maybe he got rushed at by half-naked men on a frequent basis?

"Petey!" Wade exclaimed, "Guess what? Your tux is in!" Peter turned to Wade, who was smiling widely and was back to wearing the nano-mask. His face, smooth and made of uninterrupted skin looked suddenly empty and bland. A trickle of disappointment curled around his heart, and he swallowed it back because that was stupid. Of course Deadpool had to hide his scars with a stranger—the tailor—in the room.

Peter turned back to the elderly man and immediately the tailor and the garment bag made sense. Peter groaned. "Oh my god. I thought it'd been forgotten."

Wade gasped. "You thought we'd forget about the most important part of tonight, my little debutante?"

Peter thought that spying on Hydra was the most important part, but he didn't want to say anything

incriminating in front of the tailor. "I was happy thinking the tux idea had been filed and forgotten like it should have been," Peter said. He turned to face the impersonal face of the man still holding his garment bag. Peter reached out a hand for it. "If it's velour I will be committing a murder this morning."

The tailor did not look fazed. "Of course not, Sir."

Peter gave a long look at the opaque garment bag. It was made of a thick off-white plastic, and had a small curving logo bisected by the zipper.

"Well," Wade said impatiently, "are you going to open it or what? I haven't got all day here, mister."

Peter looked at Wade with unimpressed, half-lidded eyes and slowly, agonizingly slowly, lowered the zipper of the garment bag. The plastic parted, and Peter got a glimpse of velvet and satin before he shoved the rest of the garment bag off of the hanger, revealing the tux in its entirety. It was a dark grey that Peter almost mistook for black, but it wasn't smooth. Black velvet made curlicues and spirals that intercut each other like one would see when looking at a bramble, or an untrimmed rose bush full of thorns. Every so often there were softer, wider curls that looked like roses themselves, if Mother Nature decided to make roses out of a velvet so black it was almost night. Beneath the soft upraised black of the velvet was satin as dark as the dusk right before the moon rose. It looked soft, and Peter couldn't help but run his hand down the suit jacket, letting his fingertips rest over a curve of velvet on the left sleeve. The shirt beneath the jacket was a dark charcoal that had a shimmery sheen, and the bowtie was a dusky satin that mimicked the cloth between the twined branches of velvet. "Ohhh," Peter breathed out slowly, "it's beautiful!"

"Thank you," the tailor said, his voice deep but obviously pleased.

"You like it?" Wade asked giddily. "Really like it? It's not velour, of course. I suppose velvet is an acceptable replacement."

The tailor and Peter gave Wade simultaneous looks of disgust.

"Of course not," Peter said, "that'd be ridiculous." He took another look at the suit, its simple coloring and complex artistry, and said, "I love it, though. I really do."

"Good," Wade said, "I can't wait to see you in it."

Peter swished the tux around and then held it carefully to his chest. "Well you're just going to have to wait for tonight, mister." He gave Wade an appraising look. "And what are you wearing tonight?" He turned to the tailor. "Do you have his tux tucked somewhere secret?"

Wade scoffed and Peter turned his head in time to see him roll his eyes. "I have my *own* tux, thank you very much. I *told* you that."

"Well do I get to see it?" Peter asked.

"Before the wedding?" Wade gasped dramatically.

"Oh my god, Wade, get your fucking tux. I want to see it."

The tailor nodded in commiseration

"Fine!" Wade huffed, and stamped back into his room and came out a second later with a tux the color of red wine. It was a dark burgundy Peter had no doubt would look absolutely delectable on

Wade.

No! Not delectable—delicious!

Nope, still—ah—how about just plain old great. Yes, Peter was sure it would look absolutely ravishing on Wade.

Well shit.

Wade held his suit up to his chest, showing off how it would look, and Peter had to bite his lip to keep from saying something inappropriate.

“I think you’ll complement each other quite well,” the tailor said.

Wade fiddled with his bow tie in matching burgundy for a second before, in frustration, yanking it up and over the hook of the clothes hanger, disarranging the collar in the process. “Let’s switch ties! Isn’t that like a cute couples thing to do?”

Peter shrugged, but with more finesse than his not-husband, removed the black satin bow from his own suit and flung it at Wade who caught it dexterously.

“It’s a cute couples thing, right?” Wade asked the tailor. “I think it’d be adorable.”

“I’ll send up a burgundy pocket square for Mister Peter as well,” the tailor said, and Wade squealed and tossed his red bow at Peter. Peter caught his as well, though he made sure to slow his arm to an acceptable level of athleticism.

“This feels very property-ownership-y,” Peter said as he pulled Wade’s bow tie into a flat line and tucked it into his suit jacket’s pocket.

Wade frowned. “I thought it’d be more like those half-heart necklaces you get with your BFF.”

Peter smiled at Wade. “I know. That’s why I’m doing it. If it were anyone else trying to ‘mark their property’ I’d throw their bowtie down the toilet.”

“Mark their property?” Wade repeated, aghast. “Petey, you’re your own person! You’re not property.” He obviously had the same thought as Peter at that moment, of the promise of a million dollars for staying the week in the hotel, of pretending to be someone he wasn’t and doing whatever was asked of him, because Wade blushed. “I didn’t mean—”

“You didn’t mean it like that,” Peter agreed. “I know. But it’s a slippery slope.”

Wade’s fingers twitched. “We’ll trade back. I’ll give you your tie, and the mo—”

“Stop,” Peter commanded, quietly confident. “It’s fine. I’m here to help. I’m here to—” he glanced quickly at the tailor who was looking at them without any curiosity, but who Peter was still nervous about no matter how soft his tuxes were. “Be with you,” Peter finished. “I’m yours, your husband and friend. Just not your property.”

Wade grinned at him, and Peter grinned back.

“If that’ll be all?” the tailor asked, interrupting the moment and making Peter look away in embarrassment.

“Oh, yeah!” Wade exclaimed, and led the man to the door.

“I’ll send the pocket square up,” the man reminded Wade at the door, his deep voice slow and husky, like Peter always imagined undertakers in Victorian times sounded. And then Wade and Peter were alone again.

“Breakfast?” Wade asked, turning back to Peter.

“Only if you take that mask off,” Peter said. “It’s weird looking at it now that I know it’s fake. I mean, the hazy feeling makes sense at least, like how blurry it looks, but now that I know it’s not my eyes I can’t focus past it.”

“You’d really rather see my grotesque meat-face?” Wade asked, incredulous. And then, sounding mildly confused, “hazy? You think the mask looks hazy? Pete, your eyes must be playing tricks on you, this is top of the line tech, here.”

Right, Peter thought to himself, because it wouldn’t be visible to people who hadn’t been bitten by a radioactive spider. Definitely a plus for my powers.

“Whatever,” Peter deflected, not knowing how to backtrack, “just take it off. It’s giving me hives.”

Wade rolled his eyes, but pulled the mask off and threw it onto the couch. “Happy now?”

“Very,” Peter said, and found that it was true. It felt good to look Wade in the eye and really feel like nothing was between them.

Except for Peter’s entire existence of course.

That felt like shit.

Chapter End Notes

This is more of an interlude than anything, but hey, it's an important fashion interlude before Gala stuff happens, I cross my heart.

Also, I'm going to post on my [tumblr](#) my inspiration for Peter's tux. It's not exactly what I picture Peter wearing, but the idea is similar, and if you have trouble picturing Peter's suit in your head, it'll look like that one.

Patron Saint of Prostitutes

Chapter Notes

God, I meant to get this out days ago, but then Camp NaNoWriMo started up, and the chapter kept going. Like, this is way longer than I was expecting it to be, and also way later. :(sorry about that, but I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter entered the gala on Wade's arm, his dark red bowtie wrapped possessively around Wade's neck. Wade's bowtie was tight against Peter's throat, pressing on Peter's Adam's apple with a pressure that was almost too tight. He felt, wearing the constraining suit, almost like he was in a cage. Like he was a caged animal with a collar tight around his throat. But that was an analogy almost too dark and fanciful, because if Peter followed that analogy through to its conclusion, with Wade's bowtie around his throat marking him as belonging to Wade, then Wade, wearing Peter's bowtie, would belong to Peter as well, and as weirdly gross and ownership-y as that thought was getting, it also sent a spike of desire down Peter. On some level he wanted to belong to Wade and have Wade as his own in turn, and that was dangerous thinking for someone who was hired to be there. So he put it out of his mind, the bowtie, the desire to be had, the cage he felt pressed against his ribcage and wrapped around his neck, and he looked down into the large ballroom that glittered like a thousand crystals on a floating chandelier.

They walked down a set of shallow marble steps, slowly, a show of ease and uncaring that Peter wished he could access in his real life. There was no rush, because nothing mattered because anything that came up could be bought or bribed away, because they were rich. What a great costume to put on, the guise of a rich man. A rich couple. Peter let his hand rest lightly on Wade's arm. He was possessive-looking, but uncaring as well. He knew Wade was his, he didn't have to latch on like a leach. They'd practiced walking like that for half an hour to get the grip and tempo just right.

Wade leaned down and pressed a sensuous mouth against Peter's cheekbone, ostensibly to look like he was whispering sweet nothings into Peter's ear, and instead whispered, "You know, I would give anything to be rockin' up in this joint decked in my favorite crinoline ball gown. Like, fuck these people, but I'd look hella swanky in that thing, and I've never even worn it to a party, let alone a fucking *gala*. Like, Jesus Petey, it's a slow fade from turquoise in the top left of the bodice into a sunset-y pink-y yellow in the bottom right corner of the skirt and it is *sweet*. And it is, like, thick, like the skirt bit is wide, Petey, like really wide. I'm like one of those Barbie cake-toppers stuck in the biggest cake to ever cake, Petey. So huge. It's the best."

Peter pressed his lips together to keep from laughing, and then remembered that he was supposed to be looking seduced and happily married, so he let his expression tremble into a more excited territory. At least he could say his smile wasn't fake.

"You should have," Peter responded, just as quietly, making sure no one was in hearing range. The people around them were in gowns and suits almost glitzier than Peter's and his self-consciousness almost completely receded at that realization. "I think you'd look absolutely stunning in a dress of that description. I don't know how many of these ass-clowns would *agree*, but I think it'd be marvelous."

Wade turned to him sharply, with wide eyes. “You’re serious,” he said, just loud enough to be considered a normal speaking voice, and in a tone that toed the line between a question and a statement.

“Of course,” Peter said, just as loudly. “You’d look fabulous in anything, but especially something that ornate and, well, princess-y.”

Wade laughed. “Next time then, eh?” he asked, and without any thought Peter responded.

“Please do. I’d love to dance with you, swing you around with all that volume,” and only after the words left his mouth did he realize that that would never happen. There weren’t any more galas to be had, and even if there were, after this Wade would have no use for him. None of the rest of his billion-step plan to take down Hydra and protect the world included a prostitute, not even a one who was particularly good at acting (as it turned out).

He shouldn’t be surprised. They were playing a part and they had to keep playing a part. No time to get upset, he told himself, and made his smile wider, more brisk. He’d be hearing a lot more that would hurt him, he bet, before the night was through. No reason to make it any easier.

Wade let out a small sigh of genuine ecstasy. “Oh, what I wouldn’t give to be lifted while wearing a—” he cut himself off to look suspiciously around him, perhaps realizing for the first time that they weren’t exactly alone, and that Wayne Winston, macho man and CEO, wouldn’t go gadding about in a floofy ball gown. “Well,” he said more cautiously, “I’d love to be lifted in that sort of getup, but I’m afraid you haven’t the arm strength.” He looked down at Peter, at where Peter’s slender fingers draped themselves lightly over Wade’s elbow. His eyes ran up Peter’s arms, lithe, but thin, and down Peter’s body, which was little more than a two-by-four’s thickness, and not much heavier. “Or the height.”

Peter followed Wade’s glance down his body, and he could see, objectively, how weak he looked. He was skinny, too skinny, and he knew that he probably would always *be* skinny. Not too long ago, less than a week (had it really been less than a week since Wade had sauntered into his life and whisked him away?) he’d been starving on the streets. And even when he hadn’t been starving, his metabolism burned any energy intake so fast that he’d never put on weight. He’d been pole-thin when he had been eating Aunt May out of house and home, five meals a day, of course he was thin now, after so many weeks of nothing on top of nothing on top of nothing. So, no, he did not look like he could even lift a dictionary, let alone an entire man, especially one so muscle-bound as Wade. But, of course, Wade wasn’t taking into account the extra strength, the bus-lifting strength, that Peter had been gifted by a radioactive spider. Peter could lift a fully decked-out Wade over his head with one arm and not break a sweat.

But that wasn’t exactly something Peter could just blurt out, and certainly not in this place surrounded by these people. No one around them could be trusted, and Peter wasn’t one-hundred percent sure Wade could be either. At least, not with something as important as that little secret. Not yet.

Instead, Peter said, “I think you’ll find I’m stronger than I look,” and let it sound like a joke, something cute one would say to one’s husband.

Appropriately, Wade laughed.

They skirted around the edges of the room, avoiding the direct center which held maybe half a dozen dancing couples, but tried to weave through the throngs of chatting socialites and up-and-comers in a way that looked organic and not like Wade was trying to find an incriminating conversation to overhear and record.

They walked slowly, and every now and again Wade dipped his mouth down to Peter's cheek seemingly to mouth his way up Peter's jaw and leave little kisses along his cheek bones whenever the fancy hit him. And of course he always took the opportunity to whisper hilariously rude and vulgar things about the people they were passing into Peter's ear.

Peter spent most of his concentration trying not to bust a gut laughing when Wade made fun of the frankly atrocious leopard-print dress an older woman was wearing, or the fact that one of men in fancy-suit had a lipstick stain on his collar that was *not* the same shade as the one his wife was wearing, or that said wife was making goo-goo eyes at a woman in an emerald dress half-way across the room unbeknownst to her husband.

"It's really pretty sweet," Wade said into Peter's ear, his lips brushing along the shell and sending (really inappropriate) chills down Peter's back. "I mean, look at the one in green, she's obviously just as in love, or lust? Just as in lust as the one with the mink stole, and honestly, they should just run away together. Obviously."

"Obviously," Peter concurred out of the side of his mouth, trying to will away the heat he could feel in his cheeks.

"And get away from these Hydra bitches," Wade continued at a whisper as he brushed a strand of Peter's hair away from his eyes with his free hand. "Unless they *are* one of the Hydra... well, now I feel weird calling them bitches. Um, Hydra assholes. Yeah. If they *are* Hydra assholes, then they aren't cute at all and they deserve only sadness for their misdeeds against humanity." He pressed a kiss to Peter's temple, and suddenly play-acting as husbands wasn't nearly so fun, because somehow Peter's heart had gotten involved and he'd only just realized it.

(So first of all, Heart, what the fuck)

He didn't tense, because he it wasn't a shock or surprise. It was a slowly coming to terms of something he'd known in the back of his mind for it felt like forever. Not a cold spray of water on a warm day in the pool, but a realization that while he'd been floating and floating in the water, his fingers had gotten all pruny. And like, of course, looking back, it was super obvious it was going to happen. He'd been in water before, he'd seen others go swimming. Stay in long enough and your skin wrinkles at your fingertips and toes. But that didn't mean he liked looking down at himself and seeing that he'd changed without noticing. And eventually he'd have to get out of the water.

"Where do we need to go," Peter said more seriously, trying to change the subject, "to overhear whatever we need to overhear and to record whatever we need to record?"

Wade straightened up a little, his mind now focused on something other than Hydra gossip. "Well, we could always see what Hope is up to. She's always willing to chat about who's who in the organization."

Peter's lips formed a grimace without his say-so and he tried not to hiss aloud. His mental hissing was enough.

"But," Wade continued, "I got a lot of names and info out of her last night, and SHIELD techies are already working on that stuff, so why beat a dead horse? I guess the same goes for Poppy and Rufus, which honestly I could not be happier about. Poppy's ok if a little quiet, but Rufus is just bland as oatmeal. He needs some spice in his life."

"His wife is a mad scientist," Peter said dryly, "I think he has enough spice in his life."

Wade shrugged. He glanced lazily around the gilded room, filled with sparkling and bejeweled

racists, bigots, and just general assholes.

A nasally voice from somewhere in the room floated back to Peter, catching his attention with the language he was using, "... so I said to Murphy to blow the whole place wide open... and in Uganda... of course he... still standing... structure of the base..."

Peter blinked. It was the only conversation happening in the whole room that he could decipher was perhaps about something a little less than appropriate for the setting they were in. Other conversations were happening all around them, up and down, along the walls, by the bar, on the dance floor, but the only one not transparently innocuous was being instigated by a nasally voice, and when he concentrated, he could pinpoint the location of the speaker as by where the caterer's table was laid out.

"Let's get something to eat," Peter said to Wade. Maybe they'd get some important info out of the owner of the nasally voice.

Wade blinked. "Uh, yeah, maybe we'll, uh, get something good over there."

"Like food," Peter said, and winked a little. Just a little. To feel like a real co-spy in this spy mission (He still wasn't positive they weren't going to die).

Wade let out a startled laugh. "Alright, let's go get something to soothe our appetites."

He wrapped an arm around Peter's shoulders and guided him towards the table. There were men and women in caterer's uniforms, but Wade ignored them, evading the whirling regality around him and pushing Peter along beside him all the time. The table, when they arrived, was decked to the hilt with silver plated platters that were themselves filled with a variety of colorful finger-foods that Peter would dream about for days to come. Bright reds and vibrant yellows flowered around deep greens, and Peter wasn't sure, if asked, he'd be able to name a single food he saw. It all looked delicious and exotic and weird and strange and Peter wasn't really that hungry, but Peter saw himself reaching for a bright red cube of something sandwiched between two pale yellow slices of something else, and when he popped it in his mouth he found that it was sweet! He was in love. He could stay at this table all night, trying all of the delicacies arrayed on shining platters and enjoying himself.

He turned to Wade to share his new-found bounty, but Wade wasn't looking at him, or the table. Wade's eyes were trained unerringly at a stout man in a military dress uniform, a few ribbons hanging from his chest and the cap on his head tilted a little too far back on his balding head. He was standing by the table with a half-empty plate in his hand that he was gesticulating with a little too wildly sending the food on it tumbling wildly every time he waved his arm. It was pretty obvious that he was way past intoxicated. When he spoke his nasal voice grated so annoyingly that Peter almost didn't notice what he was saying.

"So we charged in," he was saying an audience of mostly-bored looking New York socialites, "and we beat the bloody pulp out of them. What a night! I can picture it now, the moon just peeking from behind a blast-danged cloud, and the bodies strewn about us with their puny little AK-47s and AR-15s useless in their hands." He spat on the ground, which was super disgusting anyway, but also the tilt of his body caused a sphere of something that vaguely resembled beef to slide off the man's plate and fall to the marble floor with a wet splat. "But what did they expect? We have the best assault rifles and submachine guns and *tanks* that Heckler and Koch can produce. German-made is the only way to go in *our* line of work." He winked overenthusiastically and almost toppled over. He took a second to right himself, and when he did, a few of his audience had skittered away, escaping from his obvious drunkenness. He seemed to deflate a little and look around like he wasn't sure what to do. He stood like that for a full minute, looking lost, and stuck

in his own head, before Wade spoke.

“And then what?” Wade asked aloofly from Peter’s side, sounding only mildly interested, but the man honed in on him, obviously excited to have someone to talk at who wasn’t going to slink away in boredom (or disgust, anger, or annoyance).

“Well,” the man said, gesturing Wade closer, and Peter followed only half a step behind, “we pumped ‘em full of lead, even the ones lying dead, because what’s better target practice than men who can’t fight back?” Peter could feel Wade tense, obviously wanting to say something, but he held still. The man laughed uproariously. “And we got them all. That’ll teach ‘em, eh? To try to mess with our might!”

Wade smiled in agreement. “I think I heard you mention Heckler and Koch?”

The man nodded enthusiastically, taking the bait, and then his and Wade’s conversation devolved into technical jargon that Peter didn’t know besides recognizing most of the words as having to do with weapons, and not local ones either. Peter did his best to look interested, and honestly, he wanted to know what they were talking about, but it all just went over his head. He berated himself a little for not picking up a weapons manual sometime. He fought guys with guns often enough, he should know what they were using to try and riddle his body with bullets. And then to make it worse, they devolved into what Peter was pretty sure was German, with a few English words thrown in that might as well have been gibberish for all Peter could make head or tails of them.

But despite his (almost eye-gouging) boredom at having to listen to Wade and this ass-clown Hydra Colonel Sanders talk in nonsense words, he refused to leave. He could have, he thought, easily have gotten away with stepping away a moment to get a drink. It wasn’t like *he* was contributing to the conversation. But he refused to leave Wade’s side. It wasn’t that he thought Wade couldn’t protect himself if it came down to it, and it *certainly* wasn’t like Peter couldn’t take care of himself. But he was here for a reason, and together they put up more of a united front. And if Wade needed him, no matter what, and for no matter what reason, Peter wanted to be right there. Even if it meant having to stand and look interested as he was bored practically to tears.

Peter reached out subtly, intent on not interrupting the conversation, and linked his fingers with Wade’s beneath General Dickhead’s line of sight. Wade paused between words, not long enough to draw attention, but there was a definite break, and Wade glanced at Peter out of the corner of his eye. He grinned, just slightly, and Peter smiled back.

They didn’t stay with the loudmouth too long, when it seemed like he was getting a little too tipsy, and starting to repeat himself, Wade made soft parting words and a smooth exit, leaving the man looking almost confused and alone by the caterer’s table. After that it wasn’t difficult finding people who seemed to know if not too much, than just enough to catch Wade’s attention. They meandered from conversation to conversation, never saying too much, or revealing that they didn’t know enough, and always leaving before anyone became suspicious of them asking such specific question in such a care-free tone of voice. Peter was almost fooled by Wade’s character himself, how dismissive and above-it-all that Wade seemed, how aloof, and poshly reckless, and he *knew* it was all a mask.

And it was weird, once more seeing Wade devoid of scars. It helped, Peter supposed, remind him that this Wade, this *Wayne*, was just a ruse, because looking at him now, he could see the edges, the bravado, and he knew what Wade looked like without the photostatic veil on.

A couple of people hit on Wade (and who wouldn’t?) but Peter was able to scare them off with his clinging and possessive hand-holding, and he wondered what the fuck was wrong with Hoe Van Bitch that his obvious possessiveness didn’t scare her off as easily (or at all). A few hit on Peter,

but when that happened Wade wrapped his arm more possessively around Peter's shoulder, almost forcing Peter to snuggle up to him, and looked murderous until they left. It felt good, to have someone who wanted him enough to practically growl if someone else looked at Peter with a gaze even a tad too enquiring. It also felt bad, because as much as Wade was a possessive and protective husband, they weren't actually married, but Peter told himself he'd stop thinking of that tonight, and he would.

Things started to repeat themselves after a while. News stopped being new, and Peter and Wade started hearing more and more of the same information from different conversations.

"It looks like we've hit bottom," Peter said to Wade out of the corner of his mouth after the fourth time someone alluded to taking an 'extended vacation' in Dubai.

Wade grabbed a champagne glass from the tray of a passing server and shoved it into Peter's hands before grabbing one for himself. Wade tossed his back, and put his empty hand to Peter's back to steer him closer to the center of the room.

"Looks like," Wade agreed.

"Does that mean mission over?" Peter asked, voice low enough not to carry over the din in the ballroom.

"Eh," Wade said non-committally.

Peter rolled his eyes. "Way to really boost my confidence about this whole thing."

"Shush," Wade said, and then reached out and snagged the champagne glass from Peter's hands, as of yet un-drunken, and tossed it back as well.

"Rude," Peter exclaimed. "What if I was going to drink that?"

"Then you should have already." Wade dropped the two empty glasses onto another server's tray. "I mean honestly, Pete, who doesn't drink a perfectly good glass of champagne when it's placed in their sweet little fingers?"

Peter looked at his fingers. "That was a... weird... adjective to use for my," his fingers did a little finger wave, wiggling up and down, up and down, like he was drumming his fingers along a table that wasn't there, "phalanges."

Wade coughed out a laugh. "Enough finger talk. Could I entice you to dance with me?"

Peter laughed delightedly (not noticing a few heads that turned in his direction). "Of course, who am I to say no to my wonderful husband? I would *love* to take a turn around the room with you."

Wade stuck out his elbow and Peter rested his hand on it loosely. They stepped towards the circle in the middle room where glittering folk spun around and around each other, their steps in time with the steady beat of the classical music coming from a live orchestra in the corner of the room. Peter remembered, sort of halfheartedly, that he didn't know how to dance. He didn't. He'd never learned.

He was about to go out and make an absolute fool of both him and Wade, he was going to step on Wade's feet and trip and fall down.

And it didn't even matter.

"I can't dance," Peter mentioned as they broke the circle and stepped out onto the marble floor. "I'm going to trip and fall down, and I'm going to ruin our reputation in front of all of these nice, nice people."

Wade chuckled and steered Peter closer. He took Peter's hand, placed it on his shoulder, took Peter's other hand in a loose grasp, and placed his own hand on Peter's waist. "Now, just follow my lead," Wade said, and started to move.

He went slowly first, moving forward and back, and Peter had to look down at their feet to make sure he wouldn't step on any toes, but then he started to get the hang of it. He was agile, had quick reflexes, and if he could learn to swing through New York city without crashing into any buildings, he should be able to learn to dance out on the floor.

It wasn't extremely difficult. His body was moving in ways not too unusual. Step forward, step step, step backward, step, step. Move when Wade pushed and move when Wade pulled, and don't look down at your feet, just trust. It was the trust that was tricky. He wanted to rely on himself, on his sight and senses to keep himself from running backwards into somebody or tripping on Wade's feet, but Wade started slow, and Peter already trusted him, and as Wade sped them up, when they both grew confident that Peter wouldn't upend them, Peter matched his movements turn for turn, spin for spin, step for step. It wasn't supremely fast, or intricate, but it felt like the peak of the arc of one of his swings, when he reached the very top and he let go of the web, right before he shot out another and began his descent, right there for that second of freefall when he was still but the world was moving around him, and the wind beat at him from all sides and for that second he didn't have to think. Dancing with Wade was like that. It was spinning around and around until it felt like he was standing still, and the world was turning around him and Wade, and it felt like the edge of a precipice, but he knew that when he fell it would only bring him back up again.

"You can't dance my ass," Wade said into Peter's ear. "You're dancing just fine, right now."

"I *couldn't* dance," Peter said, "but you're a great teacher."

"And you're a good student," Wade said, "if you've really never danced before. No lessons?" Peter shook his head. "No going out to clubs?" Peter shook his head again. Wade scoffed. "Seriously? Did you not go out? *Do* you not go out?"

Peter shrugged. "That's not really my scene," he confirmed.

Wade shook his head in wonder. "Weirdest prostitute," he muttered beneath his breath.

"What was that?" Peter asked with a too-wide smile.

"Nothing," Wade was quick to respond.

Wade tugged Peter closer as they skimmed past Poppy and Rufus, who were circling each other, arm in arm, in a melancholic cousin of Peter and Wade's dance. Peter caught the edge of a conversation it seemed like Rufus was having pretty one-sidedly at Poppy about their future. He seemed to think her bent on discovering human physical perfection could be affecting their relationship. Based on her silence, she didn't seem to care. Peter considered for a moment tracking them, leading Wade's steps so they'd follow the couple to be able to pick up their conversation in case it circled round to something incriminating.

"Do we have enough?" Peter asked beneath his breath, focusing on keeping his expression neutral.

"Enough what?" Wade asked, keeping his voice just as low. "Enough info to move on to step two

of this fifteen-step plan to take down Hydra and save the Universe? Probably. Why? See something implicating, like, another level to this whole Dubai whatever whatever boom-goes-the-whole-world thing?"

Peter tried to focus his hearing on the Cranes' conversation. He caught just a wisp of it, just a trickle of conversation, but it was enough for Peter to know that Poppy was saying something about Rufus's performance in the sack, or lack thereof.

"No," Peter said lightly, letting his voice return to its usual volume, and looking Wade in the eye. "Just wondering when it'd be acceptable to blow this joint."

Wade pouted dramatically. "Are you bored of me already? Me? The light of your life? You husband and lover? The man who adores you more than Ricky loves Lucy?"

"You know they divorced in real life," Peter pointed out.

Wade gasped in faux pain. "How dare you," he hissed, and looked like he was about to say something else, when the song that had been wrapping around the room trailed to an end, and the wall-mounted ornate lamps and sparkling chandelier dimmed as a spotlight descended on a person standing at the end of the room in a glittering gold dress that was tight against her curves and flared past the knee, backed against decorative velvet curtains, and holding a microphone.

It was Hoe Van Bitch.

She smiled, and it was a dazzling display of teeth like white marble and lips like blood, pretending to be something delicious when really it was vicious.

Every movement in the room had slowed when the lights had dimmed and the music died, but when Hoe, in her dress that gleamed like treasure, opened her scarlet lips, the room grew completely still, every face turned to her, everyone waiting with almost tense eagerness for her to speak. Peter and Wade had stopped along with everyone else, and had stood, facing Hoe, with Wade behind Peter, his arms wrapped loosely around Peter's torso, his cheek resting against the side of Peter's head.

"Hello, Everybody," she said slowly in a tone that Peter could only describe as seductive, "and welcome to Cephalophore Incorporated's annual charity fundraising Gala."

Peter made a face. He hadn't thought about it, but obviously Hydra wouldn't reserve a ballroom and host a party, in semi-public, under the name of Hydra. Of course they'd have cover, but seriously? Cephalophore? What a grisly, and absolutely suspicious name. Peter dipped his head to look at the faces of the people around them, but everyone seemed to be neutrally attentive. No one looked confused or grossed out, which led Peter to the conclusion that either these people were so into Hydra that they no longer understood why that would be a weird name for a company to have because they'd already sold their souls to the eight-headed creature trying to destroy the earth, *or* they straight up didn't know what a Cephalophore was.

Peter turned so he could see Wade's face, which was also sporting an expression of mild disinterest. Peter twisted just enough to press his lips against Wade's ear without disturbing Wade's arms wrapped around him. "You know what a Cephalophore is, right?" Peter whispered, as quiet as he could be, into Wade's ear. Hoe was talking in pleasantries and greetings that politicians and PR people have used for centuries to take up time, and talk in circles, without ever really saying anything. Peter was confident that ignoring wouldn't cause them to miss much of anything.

Wade looked at Peter out of the corner of his eye before giving a minute shake of the head.

“A Cephalophore,” Peter whispered, lips hovering a hairsbreadth from the shell of Wade’s ear, “is a saint who walks around carrying their own severed head. Like, what the fuck? What kind of corporation is this supposed to be? Decapitation central?”

Wade’s shoulders shook in silent laughter. He turned his head, and for second they were nose to nose, so close Peter could have tilted up his face and they would have been kissing. A fission of energy sparked between them, and suddenly it was slightly hard to breathe. It was like every romance novel Aunt May had ever read (and ok, yes, Peter had read them too, but only because Aunt May had looked so sad at not having anyone to discuss them with after Uncle Ben had passed)(and ok, yes, he had ended up enjoying them, but shut up about it, ok?). So close Peter could feel Wade’s breath light against his own lips, and then Wade leaned even closer and Peter’s brain snapped to attention, because (*Idiot!*) no, Wade hadn’t leant forward in some adorably cute moment between the two of them, he was leaning forward because he had something to say. Blushing and berating himself for the imagined romantic tension (shame, shame, so much shame), Peter turned his head, and felt as the tip of Wade’s nose brushed against his ear.

When Wade spoke it was in a whisper, but the light warmth of his breath tickling Peter’s skin made a tingle run down his spine and he shuddered in something very close to pleasure.

“Am I a cephalophore then?” Wade asked, his whisper low and husky, and he pronounced ‘cephalophore’ sensually, his tongue curling over the soft “C,” elongating it and the vowel, and pounding out the rest of the word in thudding breaths of air. For a second Peter’s thought he must have misheard, or his brain must have switched around the letters, and Wade had really said *Fellatio*, the soft hisses and curling vowels, but no, that would be ridiculous. Wade wouldn’t say ‘Am I a blowjob?’ That’d be patently ridiculous. And his brain caught up a second later (after a few minutes of producing nothing but white noise) and confirmed that Wade had indeed asked if he was a cephalophore. Not a blowjob.

And then, Peter thought about the meaning of what Wade had asked and had to bite his bottom lip to keep from laughing aloud. He shook his head, and an affronted huff ghosted across his cheek.

“Why not?” Wade whined, sounding slightly less sexy, “I’ve got that diggity awesome healing factor. I could totally walk around carrying my own severed head. It’s like, my *thing*.”

Peter jerked his head away from Wade’s mouth, and reached up two fingers to manually turn Wade’s chin to allow access to his ear.

“Because,” Peter whispered, not letting his mirth increase the volume of his tone, though he desperately wanted to belt out in laughter, “you are nowhere near to being a saint. Your name and the word ‘Saint’ shouldn’t even be used in the same sentence. Wade the Saint.” He snorted, softly, and could see out of the corner of his eye, Wade’s cheek lift like he was smiling. “Saint of what?” Peter continued, “Bad decisions and sex workers? I don’t think so, big guy.”

Wade snickered a little too loudly, and a few heads turned towards them from the crowd around. Peter immediately turned back towards the front, towards the spotlight and Hoe, and tried to look like he hadn’t just been having a whisper sesh in the middle of this probably important speech. Hoe was saying something about the feebleness of man and change in the future, and donating to the cause and how Cephalophore Inc was going to change the world.

Peter felt Wade’s nose skim the top of his ear, and felt his lips move against the curved ridges of cartilage in the middle, and shivered, as Wade said, “I don’t know. I think I’d be a great patron saint of sex workers. It’s been working out pretty well for *you* so far, hasn’t it?”

Peter pursed his lips and sent an elbow backwards sharply, and felt pretty accomplished when

Wade let out a little “oof.”

Peter turned back to Hoe, set on at least watching the end of her speech, but it was hard to concentrate with Wade’s arms wrapped around him, and with Wade continuing to make unnecessary commentary in Peter’s ear, gibberish the Peter couldn’t even fully hear, and so most of what Hoe said went completely over Peter’s head. Then she was done, she made some generic comment about the future of Cephalophore Inc. and stepped away from the spotlight, and Peter let out a little sigh of relief because as important as this whole endeavor was, listening to a man-stealing rude-ass Hoe talk for fifteen minutes about complete bullshit that wasn’t even true was *not* a fun time, and not even a particularly *interesting* time, and was completely a super boring time. And then she handed the mic over to someone else, a man in a suit with a green pocket square and white-blond hair slicked back, and he started talking.

And it was *worse*. How could it get *worse*? He was just talking in circles, saying buzzwords and saying absolutely nothing by saying everything. It was a talent, and Peter would have been impressed if it weren’t making him so antsy. His left leg kept kicking out, and he was having a hard time standing still. Pent up energy and adrenaline were making it especially difficult to keep his eyes forward and his head up when all he wanted to do was swing around the city, punching bad guys. He wanted to punch *these* bad guys. He wanted to run around the room, to jump and sprint, and take out as many of these sons of bitches as he could before he shook himself apart, standing in this room of villains, trying to act like a trophy husband, and like a neo-nazi, and like someone who could one day marry Wade Wilson, and he couldn’t.

“You’re shivering,” Wade whispered into Peter’s ear, jolting the younger man back to himself.

Peter took stock. It wasn’t just his leg that was twitching and kicking, it was his whole body, like a tremor running across his skin. Pent up energy and anxiety. Right. He let out a long breath and then breathed in slowly through his nose, and forced himself to relax, forced his legs to ease, and the tremor to subside. It felt tight, like his insides were too big for his outsides, or his skin wasn’t flexible enough to conform to the jittering and jolting he felt inside. He kept breathing slowly, and refused to let his muscles tense. He just needed to go for a long run. Or get in a bout of fisticuffs with the Rhino.

“It’s cold in here,” he whispered back to Wade, and avoided his eye.

God. How long had it been since he’d last been out fighting? When was the last time he’d taken down a robber, or a kidnapper? When was the last time he’d done anything *worthwhile*? Honestly worthwhile? When?

Well he hadn’t been going out this past week. Of course he hadn’t been going out at night when Wade was paying him for the past week. It would have been impossible, and to be honest, it hadn’t even crossed Peter’s mind. Later in the week, they were out at night, and earlier in the week he’d been starving and weak, and before he’d seen Wade, before Wade had taken him someplace warm and safe, and had given him sustenance, before that Peter had been tired and dirty and falling apart. And he’d been like that for so long.

It had been...wow...it had been at least since before Aunt May had gotten sick. Really sick. She had been teetering on the edge of serious illness for a few months before she’d been hospitalized, and somewhere in that time frame he’d just...stopped. Too many things going on, and not wanting to leave Aunt May alone while she grew frailer and frailer and just withered away, had caused Peter to go on hiatus, and that hiatus had grown and grown, and now Peter didn’t even know how long it had been since he’d donned the mask. He couldn’t remember. Uncle Ben had said that with great power came great responsibility, and for far longer than Peter would have liked, he’d been acting

irresponsibly.

“I’d offer you my jacket,” Wade whispered in his ear, “but I think a tux jacket over a tux jacket would look gauche, and I’ll forgive some pretty terrible shit, Petty, but being a fashion disaster is not one of them.”

Peter felt his worry and concern and the trembling emptiness beneath his skin break at that, and he smiled. “Says the man who wanted a velour suit, you walking disaster,” but he spoke just a fraction too loudly in this space filled to the brim with those too rich and too cruel to be anywhere else, and a few heads turned to his with disapproval on their perfectly sculpted faces, and it was too much. Peter hooked a finger under and around Wade’s bow tie and yanked him down till his ear was level with Peter’s mouth. “If there’s nothing more we can gain here, I think I’m going to head back up to the room. You can stay here till this gala finishes. I’m sure if something pops up you’ll be able to handle it.” And if that something was Hoe Van Bitch, well then that was really none of Peter Parker’s business.

Without waiting for a response, Peter let go of Wade’s tie, turned, and melted into the crowd. He wasn’t short by any stretch of the imagination, but he was lanky, and he still hadn’t recovered all of his muscle mass from his practical starvation and his days on the streets, not to mention he was as flexible and acrobatic as the day he’d been bitten by a radioactive spider, so he was able to dip in and out around people with a sense of ease that Wade, with his broad shoulders and wide stance, could never replicate. He got to the grand doors, up the stairs from the ballroom and slipped out, never having looked back. He didn’t expect Wade to follow, and so he didn’t look back. He didn’t want to be proven right.

If he had looked back he would have seen that he *was* being followed, but he didn’t, so he stepped into the softly carpeted hall and went slowly up the gilded stairs, completely unaware.

Chapter End Notes

Anyway, cliffhanger! Who's following Petey? Why won't he goddamn look behind him? When will anyone actually admit their feelings??? Who knows, guess we'll have to wait for Chapter 13

I had to research weapons for this chapter and I don't, I don't know anything? Like, I know they're only mentioned once or twice but it was so many words I didn't understand.

I also researched Patron Saints, well, a while ago, but I've been saving this info for the right chapter. There really *is* a patron saint of prostitutes. And guess who it is? No really, guess. Ok fine, I'll tell you. It's Saint Nicholas! That's right, good ol' Saint Nick is also Patron Saint of Prostitutes. Hope this doesn't ruin Christmas for you. I, for one, think it's endlessly hilarious and I respect Santa Clause one hundred percent more now

Patron Saint of TVs

Chapter Notes

Wow, guys, hey, it's been a--*hot* minute since my last update. Like, almost 3 weeks? I'm lame. But hey, Camp NaNoWriMo combined with getting my wisdom teeth ripped from my mouth made for some long days. Wisdom Teeth, my dudes. *Wisdom Teeth* I do not recommend. I hope the chapter lives up to expectations, you guys. Enjoy!

Also, btw, *SPOILERS* warning for some seriously harsh words said towards Peter of the disparaging-of-sex-workers variety. Read with caution if that'll be triggering for you

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter noticed something was wrong just as he was turning the knob to the door to his and Wade's suite. It wasn't a strong feeling at first, just a light tickle at the back of his neck, a little chill that made his hair stand on end, and he paused for a moment, focusing on the feeling, at its weakness, at its familiarity. And then it grew stronger, and it was immediately recognizable as his Spidey sense.

Peter whipped around and pushed his suite's door open at the same time, creating two points of exit if it came down to it.

But behind him wasn't a super villain. It wasn't the Green Goblin, or the Rhino, or Doctor Doom, or even the Red Skull, though if any super baddie was going to show up at this gala's hotel, he'd expect it to be the Red Skull. Hail Hydra, and all that shit.

But it wasn't any of them at all. Instead, it was the guy from last night, the guy who'd stopped Peter on his way from the cocktail party, and he looked faintly embarrassed.

Peter pushed his paranoia and raging Spidey sense to the side. This is what happened when he let himself go. Soon he'd be webbing little old ladies to the walls and living in the sewers, hiding from aliens. (Ok, yes, aliens were a real threat in New York from time to time, he got it.)

"I wanted to apologize for last night," the man started, and he smiled, and it immediately put Peter at ease. (See? Peter asked his paranoia internally, it's just an apology. Don't worry so much.)

"You were drunk," Peter said, agreement and ease, and wanting to let the guy off the hook quickly so he could go inside, undress, make himself a nice cup of cocoa (or get room service to deliver a warm cup of cocoa), and wait for Wade to return.

Fuck. Why did he leave Wade alone down there?

Oh right, because it was everything he wanted and everything he couldn't have.

Maybe he'd get himself *two* cups of cocoa.

"I was," the man said, "and what I did was inappropriate and I didn't mean to scare you *or* your husband. Could I talk to him?" The way he said 'husband' was a little too elongated, pulled out

past what normal speech dictated, but Peter brushed it off as a weird quirk of speech. The man made a show of leaning past Peter into his suite and looking back and forth for Wade.

“He’s not here right now,” Peter said truthfully, with the thought that maybe the man really was here to talk to Wade, to apologize or talk hydra business, what have you, and that being honest would make the man leave faster so Peter could return to moping on his own.

It didn’t work.

“Oh,” the man said, “well, would it be ok if I came in to wait for him?” he gestured past Peter to the room beyond.

Peter frowned. “He won’t be back for a while, so I think it’d be better if you wait till tomorrow to talk to him. Or, you were at the cocktail party yesterday, so you must have been at the gala tonight. He’s still down there; you can go talk to him now in the ballroom.”

The man shuffled on his feet uncomfortably. “At least let me come in to properly apologize to you first. I didn’t mean to scare you at all and I feel fairly horrible about the entire interaction.”

Peter ran his fingers through his hair, probably making a giant poof and completely ruining the suave look he thought he’d gotten pretty close to earlier this evening. He started to refuse, but the man looked so put-out Peter didn’t have the heart. “Ok,” he found himself saying, and then he stood back to let the man pass through. Behind him Peter closed and locked the door, not willing to have more interlopers walking through his door.

The man made his way confidently to the sitting area that held the large HD TV, and it irked Peter that the man was taking charge in *Peter’s* space. The apology would probably be half-hearted at best. These rich world-domination types were all the same. Well, he’d just have to hurry up the apology and then boot the poor guy out. Pathetic or no, Peter didn’t want the guy in this suite any longer than necessary.

He was a few steps behind the man, and took the time that gap lent him to make himself even a little more comfortable. He shucked his intricately patterned suit jacket and burgundy bowtie, tossing them to the side where he’d no doubt have to search for them later, and unbuttoned the first two buttons of his shimmery charcoal shirt. He would have slipped his shoes off too, but was afraid of scuffing them. He’d wait till he was seated and then untie them before taking them off because Aunt May hadn’t raised a ruffian and he was an adult.

The look he got when the balding man caught sight of him made Peter want to take back up his suit jacket and re-button those buttons. The man looked like he was assessing an item before purchase, noting every detail and imagining how it would look under his ownership. Peter did *not* like it. But then the look was gone, and the man sat on one of the couches, amenable and transparent, and Peter thought that maybe he’d imagined the look.

Peter sat across from him, after a long considering look, and for a moment neither spoke.

It made Peter antsy, like he was sitting before the principal, ready to be given his punishment for his bad behavior, but as awkward as it felt, *he* wasn’t going to speak first. The man had come here to apologize, Peter could wait for it.

Finally the man spoke. He rested a hand on his pot belly and leaned back, again, looking a little too confident and a little too comfortable. “I apologize for scaring you last night, but you have to understand, I was inebriated,” here Peter nodded, “and I knew I recognized you from somewhere.”

Peter furrowed his brow. “I am positive we have never met before. I would remember.” And Peter’s memory was nothing to laugh at.

The man laughed, lightly, and well-put-together, and a little too much like he rehearsed it every day in the mirror. It held just a flash of sharp white teeth. “No,” the man said, “we’ve never been fully introduced, but I know I’ve seen you before. Last night I stopped you, because I couldn’t quite place you, but this morning, sober and well-rested, I remembered. I saw you about a little less than week ago.”

Peter frowned, because he’d only met Wade four days prior. There was no way this guy had seen him before then. Unless...

“You were out on the streets,” the man continued, tone of voice unwavering and jovial smile unfaltering. “And I was picking up a little wisp of a thing, dressed like the slut she was in some gold sequins. She’s prettier than you, but I saw you too, from my car window, on a street corner just catty-corner from me. Selling your wares.”

The man laughed, and Peter jumped to his feet. He felt the blood leave his face and his hands began to shake. This was a problem. A *big* problem. He didn’t care that the man had seen him; he didn’t care about, once again being mistaken for a sex worker, because he’d been there, prepared to sell his body. And as rude as it was for this awful man to taunt Peter, and to call the girl with the shirt like a thousand suns a slut, it was nothing compared to the suddenly all-encompassing and drowning fear for Wade. If this man knew Peter was a sex worker, or thought he knew, than the next conclusion was that Wade hired him to fake being his husband (which was why he’d made the word sound so weird, Peter was a dumbass), and so Wade wasn’t really a supporter, and suddenly Wade’s life was in danger and the shaking stopped. Peter’s shoulders dropped from their tensed state, and his arms hung limp at his side. Inside Peter was alight with anger and indignation and a determination to keep Wade safe no matter what the cost, but on the outside he was limp.

The man laughed again, and Peter could easily have killed him in that moment.

“My,” the man said, “are you worried I’m going to spread the news that Wayne Winston, billionaire and CEO would rather hire a whore to pretend to be his husband than bring his own spouse to a party? Their relationship must *really* be on the rocks than. I’m sure no one else has noticed.” He laughed again.

Peter felt lightheaded, a little dizzy at the ideas and thoughts being continuously uprooted. Ok. Ok, Wade was safe. This fucking—this fucking *idiot* couldn’t even tell a fake relationship when he—no don’t think that.

This idiot didn’t know that Wayne Winston was a lie. He just knew Peter Winston was a lie. Peter frowned, and asked what he was thinking. “Then what do you want? If it’s not to blackmail Wa—Wayne, then what?”

The man stood as well, and now there was nothing between them. No polite distance of the socially awkward.

From outside the suite and down the hall Peter heard the faint sound of the elevator’s ding and then muffled thuds, the sound of running feet on carpet. Someone forgot something in their room maybe. It was lifetimes away.

“Well,” the man said, “I want what everyone wants from you. You’re a whore, darling, what the fuck do you think?”

Peter couldn't help the short, sharp snort of mirth at that. Really. Really? "Why is everything about sex with you people?"

"I have the money," the guy said, and took a crumpled hundred dollar bill from his pants pocket. He threw it at Peter, and Peter let it bounce off his chest and hit the ground. His worry levels had dropped exponentially. This guy was just a jackass who thought sex workers owed him sex just because he could shell out the cash.

"I don't think so," Peter said, crossing his arms and firming his stance. The muffled thuds were getting closer. Maybe it was their neighbor who'd forgotten something. Wouldn't that be funny?

The man laughed, and edged in closer to Peter, until his heat was almost palpable against Peter's chest. And also the guy was like, at least half a foot shorter than Peter and not at all dangerous feeling. He could launch the man out the window. Peter could crush the guy's skull in his hand. Not even needing two hands. He could crush the guy's skull one-handed. This man, balding and with beer belly not at all disguised by his too-rich-for-you tux, was not nearly as intimidating as he thought he was.

"Well," the man said, "I'm not really giving you a choice," and then with one hand he grasped Peter's wrist and tried to pull it away from his body, and his other hand tried to snake around and grab his ass. He never got that far.

"Get off, creep!" Peter yelled, and his arms shot out, possibly breaking the hand the man had wrapped around Peter's wrist, grabbed the man's collar, lifted him up and launched him through the air. Peter heard the faint sound of a door opening as the man's head collided with the television set, and then continued its forward momentum *through* the TV until his shoulders weren't visible.

"What was that?" a voice yelled, a familiar voice, Wade's voice, and Peter realized that the door opening and the footsteps running down the hall must have both been Wade. It took a second, just long enough for Peter to notice that the man, now a quarter of the way through a TV, was unmoving, for Wade to enter the room. "What," Wade started, sounding strangled and staring wide-eyed at the destruction of the TV, and the creep, and Peter, and the room as a whole, "happened?"

"Uh..." Peter said articulately, "he was trying to feel me up, I mean, he was going to rape me because he's a dickhole, and so I launched him through the TV."

Wade blinked. "You launched him," he said slowly, as if he was trying each word out as he said it, "through the TV?"

Peter nodded.

"Is he dead?"

Peter hadn't thought of that. He bit his lip and shrugged. He didn't want to be a murderer, but he was having a hard time gathering up any regret for his actions.

"Ok," Wade said weakly, and then with more confidence, he said again, "Ok. Ok, this is fine. We can deal with this. How, why did he...?"

Peter had the good graces to answer the question Wade couldn't quite articulate. "He was there, hiring his own prostitute, when you picked me up in the Bronx. Or, at least he'd been there earlier, he'd seen me on that corner." Wade looked like he wanted to interrupt but Peter didn't let him. "It wasn't...he knew I was a prostitute, but don't worry, your cover wasn't blown. He just thought

Wayne Winston hired a prostitute to pretend to be his spouse.”

Wade scoffed. “I don’t care about my cover. Damn my cover! And damn Wayne Winston, and damn this whole operation for putting you in the way of this cowardly asshole. I should kill him, if he’s not already dead.”

Peter stepped towards Wade and put a steadying hand on his shoulder. “It’s ok either way. Your cover *isn’t* blown. He wanted to hire me, or, my body. It was his dick thinking, not his brain.”

“That doesn’t *matter*,” Wade insisted. “He touched you without your permission or consent. He deserves the lowest pit in hell.” Wade turned towards the man, and stared at him for a minute, where the plastic and the screen had bent and buckled at the force the man’s head had breached the TV. “Did you do this?”

Peter’s heart twisted a little. Not quite fear yet, but anxiety. But what lie was there that was plausible? “Yeah,” Peter tried to say nonchalantly, “must’ve been the adrenaline.”

Wade gave Peter an un-amused look and pursed his lips. “Adrenaline will do a lot, Petey-pie, but let a scrawny thing like you launch a fully grown, middle-aged man through the air and into the TV so far he’s probably got his chrome dome stuck in wall plaster? No. Adrenaline is powerful but it can’t work magic.”

Peter gulped.

“If you’re a super, you know I don’t care about that,” Wade said softly. “And I can’t fault either you hiding your powers ‘til now or you bringing them out when you need them most. You protected yourself, and that’s damn well the best thing I’ve heard all night.”

“I told you I could,” Peter couldn’t help but point out, and Wade broke into a smile.

“That you did. Damn, baby-boy! If I’d ‘a known you could carry your own like that I woulda left the reins a little looser. Not that you didn’t get into trouble anyway.”

Peter shrugged. “Happens more often than you’d think.”

Wade glanced back at the man, and without returning his eyes to Peter said, “You don’t have to tell me who you are or how you got your powers. And you’re young, maybe you aren’t out there risking your life in the line of fire. Part of me really wishes that was true, and you were the smart kind who’d stay put and use his super strength?” he glanced at Peter to see if that was correct, but Peter gave no answer, and so he returned his eyes to the man, and continued, “use his super strength for things like showing off at the gym or moving furniture. You a professional house mover, Petey? You could be. But, but the way you were talking earlier, yesterday, and well, this whole week, that was powerful. You have a lot of hurt in your heart and a lot of duty on your shoulders, and I bet I’ve seen you around town in spandex once or twice, even if you’re not a big player. And like I said, you don’t owe me anything, and you don’t have to tell me who you are, but if you don’t mind, it’d sure make me feel a whole hell of a lot better knowing you were without a doubt strong enough to make it on your own out there.”

Peter gulped. This was a lot. No one knew. Well, no one who he’d ever told lived to remember, and he wasn’t sure he was brave enough to say it out loud. And they’d had a talk, a long talk about Spiderman and how they felt about him. It just seemed gauche now, and dangerous, to tell Wade who he was when he wasn’t Peter Parker. And if he told Wade, then Wade would know (think?) Spiderman was a prostitute and—actually no, that thought was just hilarious. But that mirth buoyed him up a little.

“You’re gonna hate me,” Peter warned a little sarcastically.

Wade rolled his eyes.

“Alright then,” Peter said, “I’ll be right back.” He ducked around Wade and hurried to his room, rushing to the armoire beneath which he’d hidden his backpack which held his Spidey suit inside. He grabbed it and carried it, backpack and all, into the living room.

Wade was waiting for him patiently, and it was so funny, looking at Wade with a calm blank face next to the man shoved a quarter of the way through a TV, that he almost broke down. Just, such calmness next to such destruction. Peter could pass out.

But he didn’t, instead he walked his way over to Wade and with a flourish pulled his familiar red and blue suit from the bag. He watched as Wade’s eyes grew bigger and bigger as the balled-up suit unfolded to become something entirely recognizable. But it was all still silent until the mask fell from the bundle and landed on the floor right-side up. Wade blinked down at it, and then it was like a dam had burst.

“You’re Spiderman!” Wade screeched, and pulled Peter into a bear-sized hug, crushing Peter’s backpack and subsequently the Spidey suit between their bodies. Peter didn’t mind.

“Are you ok with it?” Peter asked when Wade let go. Wade *seemed* ok with it, but sometimes initial reactions were deceiving.

“Ok with it? I’m ecstatic! I’ve been living with my hero for a week and I’m in love,” he swooned a little, and as much as it was obviously a joke, Peter’s heart twisted, just a little, just enough to remind him that he could have this, have this unbiased and complete acceptance, but he couldn’t have everything.

“You’re going to be ok,” Peter laughed.

“Holy shit!” Wade exclaimed.

“I know.”

“Holy *shit*!”

“I know.”

“Ho-ly shi-it!”

Peter paused for a second to contain his laughter. “I know.”

Chapter End Notes

Reveal? Reveal. Only a few more chapters left, more heart stuff, more feelings stuff ;)

Patron Saint of Espionage

Chapter Notes

I'm pretty sure I was late with the last chapter too. This is coming up on 4 weeks. Four Weeks!!! A month!!!! I'm really sorry for the delay. But hey, I hope you enjoy this one, and I'm working on stuff for post-Patron Saint, so I'll chat a little bit about that in the end notes :D
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After Peter calmed Wade down they removed Sir Asshole Von Rapist from the TV and took stock. He was alive, thank goodness, but completely unconscious.

"I'll kill him," Wade offered.

"Thanks but no thanks," Peter said, waving him off.

"Right, the whole no-kill policy," Wade nodded, and already seemed completely not as infatuated as he'd been immediately after the revelation. It was nice to see they were on equal footing again. "Should we slam dunk him into a dumpster somewhere?" Wade offered.

Peter lit up. "That's a great idea! Far away from here."

"With no wallet," Wade added, "and no keys, and no form of identification." Peter gave Wade a look and he huffed. "I'm not going to steal them! I'll drop them off at the front desk. I just want him to have to walk all the way back here when he *does* wake up. I want to mortally *inconvenience* him."

Peter laughed. And then thought cut off the laughter, and everything turned sharply on its head. "Your bowtie," Peter breathed out, weakly, shallowly.

Wade gave him an odd look. "What about it?"

"It's been recording everything!" His breath started coming faster and faster, and the world turned around him like he was the axis watching as the earth spun on and on beneath his feet. "They can't know! Shield can't know who I am!"

"Shh," Wade rushed to Peter's side and closed warm hands around Peter's upper arms. "Shh, shh, shh. It's ok. Don't freak out. No one is figuring out you're Spiderman without your express say-so, ok? Don't worry, we'll figure something out."

Peter tried to breathe deeply, to even out his mind, but it'd been a hell of a day and he just didn't know what to do. He snapped his mouth closed, swallowed deeply and nodded.

"Here," Wade said, "we'll figure this out." He pulled his bow tie free of its bow and from around his neck. "I'll just take the camera out and smash it."

Peter whapped Wade on the side of the head. "Stop that! You need the information you got tonight. You can't just destroy it!"

Wade gripped the bow tie. “We could hook it up to a computer and delete the stuff at the end.”

“You know how to do that?” Peter asked, then took a look around the apartment. “You have a computer?”

“Uh, no and no,” Wade said, concentrating on picking apart his bow tie with his fingernails. “We’ll figure it out once we get the camera out.” He struggled a little, digging his fingernails into the fabric. “This thing must be tiny! Or stitched in real well. I don’t even feel it.”

“Well it’s gotta be in there somewhere. You said it was in your bowtie...” Peter trailed off as he looked at the black satin bowtie, and then at Wade’s tux which was burgundy. “Fuck,” Peter said, like it was a revelation.

Wade paused in his struggles and looked at Peter. “What?”

Peter pointed at Wade’s bow tie. Well, the bowtie in Wade’s hands. “That isn’t your bowtie. *I* was wearing your bowtie. That’s *my* bowtie. We switched.”

“Right!” Wade exclaimed, and dropped the severely abused-looking bowtie to the ground. He looked around. “Where is your-slash-my bowtie?”

“I took it off when I got back to the room. It should be here somewhere.” Peter walked in the direction he’d flung his tux jacket and bowtie earlier in the night (much earlier it seemed. How many lifetimes had passed since then?). It took a little minute for him to find anything, and he ended up looking through a few couch cushions and inside a lamp before he found the rumpled clothes behind a chair, beneath a table upon which stood a ficus. It was a farther radius than he’d been looking, but he’d eventually remembered his own strength and expanded outward.

He picked the jacket up, whipped a few times to lift any wrinkles, and then hung it on his arm as he examined the burgundy bowtie. Sure enough, there was a tiny lens to the left of center, and on the back was a small flick to turn the camera on and off. He switched it to off.

“Found it,” Peter said, though Wade was watching him intently and did not need a play-by-play. He’d been helping out, mostly by ducking his head under furniture and calling to the bowtie like it was a dog the whole time. (“C’mere, little bowtie! Who’s a good tie? You are! Yes you are! Do you want a cookie?”)

“To think,” Wade said, “you were wearing the camera all night!” He looked genuinely amused.

Peter laughed, though his breath was still a little tight from his worry. “I guess I was. How...” he scrubbed at his eyes with the pads of his fingers. “How did we miss that? I mean, really, we *both* knew you had a camera in your bowtie, we *both* agreed to switch ties...”

Wade shrugged. “Heat of the moment? It doesn’t matter. At least now we know your truth is safe and the footage is safe and I won’t get my ass handed to me for messing with the footage.” He rolled his eyes. “Again.”

Peter raised his eyebrows. “Think you’ll get in trouble for letting a ‘civilian’” (he used air-quotes around the word) “wear the wire? Or, well, the camera.”

Wade shrugged. “It shouldn’t matter. You were with me all night. You got everything I would have. I think that should be enough. Except the end.” He frowned, and then looked curiously at Peter. “Why *did* you run off? And don’t say it was the cold, because if that was true you wouldn’t have immediately taken your jacket off when you got up here.” He placed a finger against the side of his nose and tapped it. “I know how to detective real well, no more trying to pull the wool over

poor Deadpool's eyes."

Peter shrugged, faintly embarrassed. "It felt too fake," Peter said, and while it was true it wasn't exactly the answer to what Wade had asked him.

Wade nodded in comprehension. "I know what you mean. When I first started going under cover I had a hard time pretending to be someone else too. It's hard."

Before Wade could even finish Peter was shaking his head. He didn't know why he didn't just agree and let Wade believe that harmless little lie, but he didn't. "No," Peter said, "it wasn't that. That, pretending with you, pretending to *be* with you was easier than breathing." He felt his cheeks heat up and averted his eyes. "No, it was everyone else. All those glitzy, glamorous people who get to stand around, laughing and dancing and eating little food noms while they plot murder and genocide and the destruction of mankind as we know it, and I was doing the same thing?" Peter threw a hand up to forestall Wade's immediate denial. "I mean, obviously not the murder part, but I was pretending to be someone I wasn't and pretending to like, and *be* like those people who hid how psycho they were behind their mascara and expensive clothing and jewelry and bowties." He let out a long breath, and scrunched his eyes closed as he ran a hand down his face. "And I was *tired* by all the grandeur and the lying everywhere. And I swear having to look at Hoe--pe Van Beek talk for three thousand years shaved a decade off my already impossibly short life."

Wade's expression, when Peter worked up the courage to look at him, had gone impossibly soft. "I don't think you're cut out to play spy," he said, and Peter laughed in relief.

"No. No-way, no-how," Peter agreed. "No more dressing up for me and playing family. I can barely keep my head straight as it is."

Wade raised a hand slowly upwards, towards Peter, and for a second Peter thought Wade was going to caress his face, but instead Wade twined his fingers around the tie in Peter's hands and pulled it out from Peter's hand. The fabric was silky smooth as it ran over his fingers and out of his grasp, though he didn't lessen his hold. And then Peter was left empty-handed.

"It makes you wonder," Wade started, as he stared down at the burgundy tie in his hands. "Or, let me rephrase that as I bet most people *don't* wonder this specific thing. But that makes me wonder how, how you spend so much time being Spiderman. That's a whole 'nother life, way more in-depth than playing husband for lil' ol' me. And you've been doing that way longer." He frowned. "Or you were. We thought you went on vacation, you were gone so long."

Peter thought back to his months (endless, it felt, not months but years, decades, centuries) on the streets and laughed. And it was an ugly laugh, but it didn't hurt as much as it had a week ago. The week with Wade, the week of sleeping in a soft bed, living with food and a roof over his head, spending time with another person, someone who laughed with him and spoke with him and made him feel like he wasn't alone in the world, like maybe the earth and the sky weren't crashing down around him, it had helped a lot. "It was no vacation," Peter said after a second. "And most days I missed being Spidey more than I missed *anything*. More than having food in my belly or a roof over my head, or Au—" He cut himself off sharply and then took a calming breath because he wasn't lying. Some days he missed swinging around the city, having a *purpose* more than he missed Aunt May, and if that wasn't the worst thing Peter could think, then he didn't know what was. And it made him feel like he didn't *deserve* to be Spiderman, if he'd rather be out playing hero in spandex than have back the woman who loved and raised him and who he gave his everything for. But it was a part of him. And losing his time being Spiderman was like losing an arm, or his sight, it was such an integral component of him. He *was* Spiderman, and being unable to do his job, to live that life, it made him feel like a shell of himself.

“But I couldn’t,” Peter said aloud. “I couldn’t be Spiderman. I wanted to, *god* I wanted to, but I was tired, and hungry, and dirty, and more nights than most I couldn’t get more than a few hours of sleep.” He yanked at the dark, silk shirt, still tucked into his pants, until it rucked up, revealing his pale stomach. He pulled more, revealing the deep hollows between each rib, the abnormal thinness of his waist. “I spent almost all day and most of the nights scrounging for food. Dumpster-diving and digging half-eaten sandwiches from trashcans, and standing outside bodegas and stores at the end of the day, hoping to catch whatever food had expired that day. I worked. But I have a high metabolism, like, really high. And it was hard enough getting enough to eat when I was provided at least solid three meals a day. I was always sneaking down in the middle of the night to raid the fridge and scavenging for unfinished meals in the cafeteria at school. I was always going to be skinny.” Wade’s lips were very thin, and he was holding himself surreally still, but Peter could see a little tremor around his shoulders, like maybe he wanted to punch something very bad, but was holding himself back. Peter shrugged uncaringly. To him this was a fact of life. “But after—when I started living on the streets, and I spent every waking hour trying to get more food, more water, anything to keep my energy up. I felt weak all the time and it was *frustrating*. And terrifying. And I just, I love being Spidey, I love doing what I do, but I didn’t have the time. I didn’t have the energy. I *wanted*, so much sometimes I could barely breathe, but I couldn’t. And it hurt.”

“It’s not your fault,” Wade blurted out, as if it had hurt to keep it in so long, and then it finally burst.

Peter blinked up at him—he’d forgotten that he wasn’t alone, that he was talking to someone, someone that for all that they were a stranger, still inexplicably cared—and let his shirt drop back down to cover his stomach, though it stayed wrinkled and stiff a little in the front.

“It’s not,” Wade insisted. “Your health is more important than anything else. God, if I’d known.” He fist was clenched so hard it was shaking. “If anyone had known. God, if the Four, or the Avengers had known, we would have helped. I swear it,” Wade said, his voice a desperate keen, “I would have done anything.”

Peter scratched at his ear, embarrassed, and averted his eyes. “Thanks,” he said quietly, and then regaining his train of thought, “but, that’s kind of why it’s so easy to be Spiderman, when it is in fact impossibly difficult pretending to be your husband, or rich, or—or whatever. I’m not *pretending* with Spiderman. I *am* Spiderman. Sometimes it feels more real to say I’m pretending to be Peter Parker.” He shrugged. “But again, not so much lately.”

“What,” Wade said, and then paused before starting up again, “what happened? Why did you suddenly hit the streets? Why did you—”

“My aunt,” Peter said, interrupting, “she died.” Wade looked like he didn’t quite understand. “She’d raised me since I was little. Well, her and my uncle, but my uncle died years ago, and then it was just me and Aunt May, and—and money’s always been tight, but with just the two of us we were just scrounging. And I loved Aunt May, she pinched and saved to get me what I needed. My clothes were second-hand, but they were good quality, and I never got a *lot* of birthday presents, but the ones I *did* get were perfect. I did not want, Wade, for I had everything. And then she got sick. Sicker.” He had to pause and take a deep breath, because just thinking of that time made tears well up.

“You don’t have to say anything,” Wade said softly, almost protectively, but Peter shook his head and continued as if Wade had said nothing. If he didn’t say it now, when would he get another chance?

“She’d always been...not in the best of health. The hospital was as well-known to me, growing up,

as my school. But she always got better. This time,” Peter blinked rapidly to stave off the wetness he could feel welling up in them, “this time she didn’t. And then suddenly she was gone, and—and I hadn’t even considered she’d be taken from me. I thought, I thought it’d be just like every other time. She was in the hospital longer, but she seemed to be getting better! And she never told me it was as bad as it was, trying to spare me maybe. I came every day after school, sometimes skipping classes or work to be with her. She missed my graduation, and she missed the awards ceremony, and College orientation, but I still thought...” Peter tugged at the hair on the sides of his head until the world righted itself again. It took a long moment, but this time Wade didn’t speak, he just stood there, arms raised slightly like he wanted to wrap Peter up in them, but held back. “And then I came in one morning and she was just...gone. They let me see her, but she was too still. I didn’t like it. And suddenly people were everywhere, calling the house, the bank sent bill after bill and then the hospital bill came in, and I couldn’t pay the mortgage on the house when it came in and I was just... so overwhelmed and alone. I had no one to turn to. And some people in suits started coming by, making noises about using the house to pay off the debts, and I couldn’t fight them! I’d dived straight from High School into College, taking on more classes so I could finish faster, getting lost in classes I kept skipping, and drowning in my already expanding student debt, and my job let me go after too many hospital-visit absences, I couldn’t pay any of them off, and—and—and so I left before I had to watch them take my home from me.”

“They wouldn’t have,” Wade said, dryly, almost humorously, but with a frustrated edge to it. “Your Aunt’s debts are not your debts.”

Peter rubbed at his eyes with the heel of his palms. “It’s not like I would have been able to keep the house either way. I didn’t have a job, and the economy isn’t exactly rife with opportunities for college dropouts with zero experience in anything but taking photos and bussing tables, and a reputation for skipping work. And who wants to hire a little know-it-all photographer who can’t afford to dress himself, let alone keep up living in a house, paying taxes and mortgages? I’d’ve had to sell it eventually. But I didn’t think of that until I was already sleeping on the streets. And I couldn’t go back then. Not to that house full of empty promises. I just couldn’t.”

Wade didn’t hesitate then. He dragged Peter into a rough embrace, squeezing him tighter than should have been comfortable, but it was nice. Wade felt warm and grounding, and Peter couldn’t stop himself from shuddering in relief. Since they’d met, it seemed, Wade had been someone to lean on, and Peter had never been so grateful for it.

They stood together like that for a moment, wrapped around each other, and when Wade finally broke the silence, his voice held hesitation. As if he wasn’t sure how Peter would react to the question.

“So you put on the red light because you didn’t see any other way to live? I’m not judging,” he was quick to add, “like I said, before. But being forced into that profession because you didn’t have any other option isn’t fair.” His anger was audible in every word he said and it made Peter smile.

Peter considered his options but couldn’t think of a reason not to tell the truth. “I didn’t, actually,” he said, biting down on an almost hysterical chuckle.

That brought Wade up short. He blinked, and then frowned, screwed up his face, and narrowed his eyes, and altogether looked like he was thinking very, very hard. Finally, he broke.

“I don’t understand,” he admitted baldly.

Peter pursed his lips and then raised a hand in front of him to forestall the man. “Don’t feel bad, ok?”

Wade frowned again, harder.

“It was an honest mistake, really, truly, so don’t go around feeling bad about it.”

“I’m not sure I like where this is going,” Wade growled.

“Well,” Peter said, “I never *did* ‘put on the red light’ as you so pleasantly phrased it. I, um, I seriously contemplated it. And I would have. I had just decided, when I was standing where I was standing when you found me, watching as a girl got into a car with this creep,” he hooked a thumb at the unconscious man, propped up against the wall, no signs of waking, waiting to be taken out to a dumpster like the garbage he was, “and I thought to myself that I could do that. It would be an easier way to make money than dumpster-diving, and less time-consuming, and it wasn’t like I’d never had sex before.” Peter shrugged.

Wade looked gobsmacked. “I’m a tool!” He berated himself. “An absolute tool. Great going, Wade! You see a hot guy on the street and you just assume he’s a sex worker! God! What’s wrong with you?” He smacked himself on the forehead, several times.

Peter caught his hand and pulled it down to his side. “I said not to get upset!”

Wade caught his eyes and Peter could see how genuinely distraught he was. “What is *wrong* with me?” Wade asked, quietly.

“Nothing,” Peter said quickly, so breathily it was almost a whisper. “I was standing on a street corner trying to figure out how to go about finding a...well, a customer! And then you strode up and offered me a crap ton of money for sleeping with you—and then I didn’t actually have to sleep with you! This was the best outcome possible.” His own words caught up with him and he felt his face flush. “Not that I don’t want to sleep with you. I would have done it, if you’d asked, I mean, that *was* what you paid for. Not! Not that you’d need to pay me to sleep with you! You—you’re very attractive and I’d love to—you know what? I’m going to shut up now. Please make me stop talking.” Wade was outright laughing by that point, and it made Peter smile to have been the one to cheer Wade up, though his face was still burning at the embarrassment of sticking his own foot in his mouth.

“So I was customer number one?” Wade asked, a few chuckles still slipping out every few words. He looked like he was trying very hard to cover up his hysteria.

Peter blew out a mostly relieved sigh and nodded. “The first and the best. You’ve been nothing but a gentleman.”

“Ignoring the bits with Hydra and espionage and having to kiss this run-through-a-meat-grinder face?”

“*Including* the bits with Hydra, all the espionage, and especially your untraditionally handsome face.”

Wade let out a weak chuckle and then ran a barely-trembling hand down his face. “This has been a hell of a week, Pete.” He frowned. “Is that your real name? Never mind. You don’t need to be revealing your real identity to someone like me.”

“Who could I trust more?” Peter asked. “Peter Parker is my real name. Wade Wilson, Deadpool, meet Peter Parker, Spiderman.” He held his hand out to shake and Wade took it with gusto. “Now we’re even.”

“Even?” Wade asked.

“Balanced out. We’re on an even playing field. I know both your names and you know both of mine.” He glanced over at guy who he’d thrown through a TV and who still hadn’t stirred. “Should we take this guy now? While it’s still relatively dark?”

Wade nodded and pulled on his Deadpool mask. “Are you going to put on a hoodie or something? Or are you going to go body-dumping as Spiderman?”

Peter considered this for a minute before a wide smile pulled jaggedly across his face. “Spidey, I think. I haven’t dressed up in a *long* time.”

“Well get crackin,’ spider-boy! We don’t have all night.”

With an excited laugh Peter scampered back into the room to don his suit, and pulling the spandex taut over his arms before letting it snap into place, shifting it around his chest so it didn’t warp, pulling on his flimsy boots and his mask that smelled of plastic and synthetic fibers and just the tiniest hint of coppery blood, it felt like coming home after a very long trip abroad.

Chapter End Notes

Again, sorry for the gargantuan wait. I need a secretary or a PA or something. Beta reader.

But I hope you enjoyed the chapter anyway :D

News on plans for my life post Patron Saint. I know I've been chatting about getting back into my [Misc](#) fic, and as of now that is my plan. I'm going to start writing more of those little What-ifs in the Petey and Wade world, but I need your help, if you're willing. I have, a *lot* of prompts saved up for Misc, and at this point I'm not even sure where to start. So, I'm going to make a poll where you guys can choose which prompts you want to read first. I'm still kind of working on the site, and the link, so if it doesn't work or there is some problem, please let me know (comment, or email, or tumblr, etc). And no obligations to participate, but I'd love to know what you guys want.

Thanks

[Misc Prompts Poll](#)

Patron Saint of Gift-Giving

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Waking up the next morning, encased in a tomb of soft Egyptian cotton and smooth silk that caught against the rough calluses on his fingers, palms, and toes, he couldn't help but feel stupidly nostalgic. Stupid because he was nostalgic for something he hadn't even left behind yet.

He missed the warm comfort of this bed that was for a week *his* bed, and Wade, who had been both a faux-spouse and a very real friend, and, he could be honest, the subject of a very big crush of Peter's. He missed the warmth, comfort, and sense of safety he'd gained, and he knew, surreally so, that he missed these things before he'd lost them, and it made him laugh, quietly, but with abandon. He flopped over in the bed, making the comforter puff out in front of him, and stared absently through the soft white sunlight filtering through the sheer cream-colored curtains and felt that nothing could ruin how lucky it felt to be able to miss something, and therefore actively *appreciate* it, before it was taken from him.

He rolled over, leaving behind the last dregs of sleep, and flung the comforter from his body, letting it land on the floor with an unsatisfyingly soft whump. He dressed in one of the outfits Wade had bought him during their shopping day, something that was deliciously new but not too unfamiliar. Soft so-black-they-were-almost-grey jeans and a forest green plaid flannel over a dark blue t-shirt. He eyed the bright red high-tops but decided that he'd never been the kind of person to wear shoes when he didn't have to, and he wasn't about to start now, so he padded out of his room in soft woolen socks.

The living room was empty, which wasn't too surprising. It was bright out, but the sun was still low in the sky. He hadn't checked the clock, but Peter would guess that it was 9 am at the latest. Wade was probably still asleep. They'd gotten back from dumping the horrible TV-man well after midnight, leaving his body in a dumpster at a construction site near the docks, and his wallet and belt in the drop box of a library across town. Who knows when, or even if, he'd ever be reunited with his lost property. Before dropping the wallet off Wade had pulled all the cash out. Peter didn't say anything. He thought about it, because theft is still theft, but his morality meter wasn't as unbiased as it usually was. But all Wade did was stuff it in a donation box for the Ronald McDonald house before heading back to the hotel.

Wade had shuffled Peter off to bed, and Peter hadn't fought it. Peter was exhausted from the day of lies and coming-outs and near-to-full harassments, but more than that he wanted to luxuriate in the ability to sleep when he felt tired, to not have to fight his exhaustion night after night. So he tumbled off to bed, leaving Wade in the living room, boots propped up on the coffee table and tablet out, writing a report of the entire event to SHIELD and sending off the recording from the bowtie-camera. He said he'd be right off to his own bed as soon as he was done, and for a split second Peter contemplated inviting Wade to *his* bed, as if all of their shared secrets would make Wade want him, in any sense of the word. Which was ridiculous, Peter realized mid-internal-debate, and left.

Peter didn't know how late Wade had stayed up, but the man absolutely deserved a lie-in, so Peter settled into the couch, propped his own feet up on the coffee table in an unconscious imitation of Wade's position the previous night, and flipped the TV on to some oldies channel, to reruns of Columbo and MASH and Charlie's Angels and Golden Girls that he'd watched on Sundays with Aunt May and Uncle Ben when they all had a day to relax.

A few hours passed with no sign of Wade before Peter felt the first stirrings of worry. It wasn't until noon had come and gone that Peter got to his feet, his concern so loud in his head he couldn't concentrate. He'd check on Wade. Just knock and see if Wade answered. He just wanted to make sure nothing had happened to the man. They were staying in a hotel full of Hydra Operatives, and last night they'd thrown one of them into a dumpster near the water after shoving his upper body through a television set. As much as Peter *felt* safe here, he really wasn't, and what if something had happened to Wade and Peter hadn't even noticed?!

Peter strode to Wade's room and rapped on his doors hard enough to bruise knuckles not reinforced by strength proportionate to a spider.

No answer.

He rapped again, harder, and felt as the sturdy wooden door shook beneath his ministrations.

Still nothing. No sound from within, no Wade yelling to come in or fuck off, no sound of shuffling bedclothes, or feet padding on carpet, or breathing. It was like there was no one inside. And it was just a millisecond, an iota of time between that realization and Peter kicking the door open with that swiftness and strength he'd neglected for so long, but in that second within a second Peter imagined a hundred scenarios where Wade had been outed as working for SHIELD and some Hydra operative had come to collect their dues: Hoe Van Bitch slitting his throat, or Poppy Crane forcing some horrendous poison down his throat, or even the captain from the gala, embarrassed at his incompetence the night before, barreling in to shoot Wade square in the head.

The millisecond after Peter had kicked the door, right by the lock, as the door was still swinging inwards he realized how dumb that was. Because Wade was Deadpool, and Deadpool had a healing factor, and was famous—no, *infamous*—for being impossible to kill.

And that knowledge was confirmed when, as the door hit the inside wall, rebounding hard enough to leave a dent, Peter was faced not with the cooling body of Wade Wilson, but instead an empty and unslept-in bed.

Peter blinked in surprise, and then in sudden hurt at being left behind once again.

There was a large brown paper sack on the bed, the kind Uncle Ben had used when raking up leaves every fall before hauling them down to the curb, stuffed to near breaking and folded over at the top. Next to it, Peter saw as he drew closer, was a piece of hotel stationery, folded onto itself, its cream color blending almost perfectly with the bedspread.

Aunt May would have given him such a stink eye if she'd seen him open the bag before reading the letter. Letters are supposed to be opened and read and appreciated first, before wrapped gifts. Peter didn't feel too bad at ignoring that social practice. He pulled the bag towards himself and impatiently flipped it on its end and shook its contents onto the bed. Out spilled stuffed animals of varying species, sunglasses, golf pencils, a box of chocolate cake mix, socks, three sealed folders of different thicknesses, a small box, an expensive looking watch, a key ring full of keys, and enough dollar bills (ranging in value from ones to fifties) that they completely covered the bed and began spilling onto the floor like a thousand pieces of greed-green confetti.

"What. The fuck," Peter whispered to himself. Then, louder, and with a small hint of panic: "Fuck. The letter!" He shoved his hands into the piles of detritus, and cursed himself for not only ignoring Aunt May's rule of reading the letter first (honestly would have been easier in the long run), but also for losing the letter in the mess he'd dumped from the bag.

He found the folded piece of stationary beneath a stuffed unicorn with a rainbow mane and large

anime eyes. He squinted at it, the unicorn, for a moment, but found no answers and gave up trying to divine what all this meant from a stuffed animal. He opened the stationary.

Dear Petey (Wade had written in the chicken scratch hand-writing Peter had begun to recognize as Wade's)

I bet you're fucking confused. Well, same. But, shit, probs about different things, eh, Petey-Pie? Like, you're probably confused by my being missing, though god knows when you'll notice, and by that fat sack of goodies laying right there. I bet you already opened it you sweet as sugar motherfucker! Didn't anybody teach you the right way to open Christmas gifts? I'm a regular ol' St. Nick and I swear you should be getting coal you impatient sweet pea.

Peter blinked. It was early fall, nowhere near Christmas.

And me? You may be wondering, what is the most awesomest Deadpool confused about? Well that's you, Pete. You're a sweet kid, a sweet guy, and you're nice. And you're Spiderman! Holy fuck! But I honestly can't see how you'd really want to be my friend. I've fucked up too much in my life, and fuck, in the lives of hundreds.

Ok. Shit. This wasn't supposed to be a pity party.

My point is you did what I asked, and you were awesome. Like, you did great, so much better than anyone else could. You're on fire! But this wasn't a—a—donation. No, shit, that's not the word. Charity! This wasn't a charity, on your part, any more than it was on mine. Shield sent me here to do this, and I hired you to help, and I'm many things, Petey, but I'm not someone to go back on my words. So I suppose I owe you a mil.

Well, ok, not a total mil. We spent some of that shit playing dress up, so really you'll only be getting \$997,563.42 from me.

Peter stared wide-eyed at the bed, covered in small bills. That couldn't possibly be a million, no matter how much money it seemed, covering the queen bed in this vast hotel room.

No. Idiot. I didn't leave a fucking million dollars in a paper sack in a hotel room, no matter how well protected it is. I fucking opened a bank account in your name.

"Fucking what?" Peter screeched at the letter in his hands.

All the documentation and shit should be in one of the folders in the bag. The red one. I got it all sorted out with big Papi Nick, he pulled a few strings, and I didn't tell him who you were, so technically it's a bank account for Peter Winston, husband of CEO Wayne Winston, but in the same folders are documents linking your name to that name, and like a legit drivers license. You know what, don't worry about it. There are two cards linked to the account, one for Peter Winston, and one I added later after Nicky's strings had been in place, for Peter Parker, so don't feel like you're lying every time you use your debit card at a Starbucks.

Peter had to sit down and close his eyes to compose himself. A bank account. Wade *actually* gave him a million dollars. And opened a bank account in his name? He might faint. He might actually faint. He had to sit down and breathe deeply and close his eyes and just. Not. Think.

When he finally thought he'd be able to read more without collapsing onto the bed of money, he resumed reading.

Now you may be asking yourself, Pete, and this is the million dollar question, you may be asking yourself: Why did that weirdo scar-guy who hired me as a sex worker when I wasn't one leave me three folders? What are the other two for? And why did he give me all these teddy bears and unicorns and monkeys but not a single sloth? I'll answer the last one first, Petey. I tried to find a sloth and couldn't. Anywhere! Why is it so hard to find a sloth plushie in New York City!? You think they'd be everywhere!

As for the other two questions. One question? Whatever. See, after I unlocked your tragic back story I got sad, and I didn't like it. Spiderman homeless? I think, fucking, not! So I found your old house and bought it back for you. Owned by May Parker and Ben Parker, both deceased. Survived by their nephew, Peter Parker, who could not be found. The house—well, it doesn't matter what I did. It's yours now, debt-free. It's your fucking house, Petey, what did you think was going to happen? It's yours! And all the fees, fines, taxes, debts, etc are taken care of. I knew a guy who owed me a favor, so don't get all weepy. I mean, fuck, Pete, I got it all done in an hour. That's why you get minions. So you can delegate.

Peter was openly crying, tears rolling down his cheeks and dropping like raindrops onto the stationary, making the blue ink run and smudge the words together. He wiped at his eyes with the back of his hand and tried to get through the rest of the letter quickly, snot running down his nose, because he wasn't sure what else he could handle.

The third folder, Pete, is the smallest. That one's easy. Nothing for you. I mean, yeah, duh, it's for you, but, like, not overtly so? I didn't have to call any shady guy or go to Uncle Nick Fury with my tail between my legs like some lost puppy for this one. In the smallest folder is a list of my hideouts, my boat holes around the city. Somewhere in the bag should be a key ring, and each of the keys is for each of the boat holes, in case anything ever happens again, anything, you'll have a place to stay. I mean it, Pete. I mean, don't go around trying to burn your house down or something, because I spent a fucking good favor getting it back for you, but if you're ever hurt in the city, I've got places all over you can drag yourself to, to fix yourself up, or crash at until you feel better. Shield doesn't know about any of the ones on that list, and they're always stocked with Twinkies and Band-Aids, and what else could you possibly want?

I got you some stuff when I was out doing bank shirt. I hope you like the unicorn, though he's no replacement for a sloth. You better not throw him away, you monster. And the sunglasses I picked out special just for you.

They were children's glasses with Power Rangers on the side of one of them and Dora the Explorer on another.

Some other stuff. Jewelry. Socks. Enough cash to hole you up in this hotel room as long as you like, eat out every day, destroy the patriarchy, what have you. I guess I'll see you around as Spiderman sometime, if our circles mesh. You're a hero, I'm a hero. It could happen. The Avengers'll be glad to see you back. You will come back, right? Spiderman's off his vacation?

Peter nodded nonsensically and still teary-eyed at the note. As if somehow Wade could see him.

Well either way, I had a great time, Peter, a truly great time, and I hope things work out for you.

He didn't sign his name or anything. That was just the end.

"Fuck," Peter said, watery and congested sounding, and patted around the bed till he found the unicorn which he pulled to his chest in a tight hug. He blinked teary eyes at the money on the bed, the now empty paper bag, the ring of keys. "Shit, Wade," he said to a person who couldn't hear him, "that sure sounded an awful lot like goodbye." He sniffed. "And I don't think I'm ready."

Peter gave it a month.

He knew about the roller coaster effect. People in high-stress environments who have so much adrenaline running through their system sometimes mistake the high of the adrenaline, of the fight, for love. So Peter waited. He packed up all his belongings, everything Wade had bought him and brought him, and moved back into the house he'd lived in with Aunt May. It hurt sometimes, walking downstairs for breakfast, and expecting to see Aunt May there, with a frying pan in her hand, and instead seeing nothing. And it hurt sometimes, reorganizing the house from the state it had been left in by the thousands of hands and feet that had tramped through the house, moving, packing, destroying, discarding, but it hurt more to think about leaving it in that condition, so Peter spent a lot of time returning the house to the shape Aunt May had left it in. And it hurt, seeing the faces of the neighbors, intensely curious, because he'd just disappeared after Aunt May's death, and then he'd come back so much skinnier and so much wealthier and no one knew the story, so that's all the gossipers talked about.

By the time a month had passed, a month of stepping slowly back into the shoes of Spiderman, a month of slowly trying to rebuild his house and his home, and a month of disobeying his heart, he knew.

He loved Wade. It wasn't the adrenaline or the fact that Wade was the only person around him. It wasn't some weird non-kidnap involved Stockholm syndrome or displacing emotions. Peter had officially not seen, or talked to, or heard from or of Wade for four times the length of time they'd been together. He knew his emotions were real.

And ok, yes, it was still mostly a crush the size of Wisconsin, but that was as fine a start as any. There didn't have to be any rushing. Peter, with now a sizable fortune, didn't have to stress between schoolwork, work, and vigilantism. He could take his time getting to know Wade better. They could go on dates. They could see movies and eat dinner together, and kiss maybe. And really, Peter just missed being with him.

And there was always the question of if Wade wanted him back, or even wanted to just try, just go on a few dates, but it wouldn't hurt to ask. Peter trusted Wade to be kind enough that if he had to let Peter down, he'd do it gently.

And Peter *wanted* him, goddamnit! He wanted him to hold and cuddle up to on the couch, and to go out to dinner with, and dance with, this time alone in Peter's living room, the furniture pushed out of the way. Peter had been Wade's husband for a week, now all he wanted was to be his boyfriend.

The least he could do was try.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks, everybody, for sticking around as long as you did. One chapter left to wrap this story up, and I'm so excited for you all to read it. (Alas, I have to write it first)

Other news, You guys went all out with the Petey and Wade Misc. Adventures Poll! I'm going to use those results to make an order of production for the next few chapters of Petey and Wade's Misc. Adventures, and I'll post that list on Tumblr. Until then, I'm going to leave the poll up for a little bit, but any further submissions won't be taken into account, and I'll take them down after I post to tumblr the list of chapter prompts. Thank you all so much for participating, and I'll put up new prompts for voting when I've written some of the ones everyone's voted for :D

Patron Saint of Coffee

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! It's the end!

After this I hope to get back into the swing of things over at Petey and Wade's Misc. Adventures, so I might take a little break while I try to figure myself out. Also July is another Camp NaNoWriMo month so I might disappear _(ツ)_/

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wade wasn't easy to find. Peter had gotten to know him in a controlled environment, when they were working as partners. He didn't know Wade's life out in the streets; didn't know where he stayed or what he did in his free time. All he could say for certain was that Wade wasn't at Peter's house, and he wasn't at the hotel they'd stayed at together, so Peter brought out the key ring Wade had left him in that paper sack and started going down the list of bolt-holes.

The places ranged from penthouse apartments to abandoned warehouses to hotel basements to restaurant attics. Some of them were exceptionally small, fitting at most a cot and a first aid kit, and some were so large Peter didn't know what to do with them, but they were all empty and held that musty smell that starts to accumulate in places that are locked up for too long without being used.

It took him days but he ran through all of them, using every key on the ring, and feeling that same spark of home at every door, followed by a resigned sweep of dejection when all he found was unused stocks of non-perishable food and first aid equipment.

In the mean while, when he wasn't Wade-hunting, he also spent a good portion of his time getting back in the swing of things, pardon the pun. Putting on the suit again, every night, made him feel, more than anything, like his life was really his again. Finally he had control of his life, and he had the means to live the way he wanted. He'd found a pretty reputable lawyer in Hell's Kitchen who was helping him deal with suddenly being rich and owning stuff and just dealing with money management in general. He had plans to re-apply to NYU for the spring semester. Altogether he had a pretty tight rein on his life, but none of that felt nearly as empowering or satisfying as merely donning the same suit he'd worn off and on since he was fifteen and a spider had spun down and bit him on the neck, changing his life forever. The suit was as much a home to him as the house Aunt May and Uncle Ben had raised him in.

The sweetest surprises were the quiet welcome-backs the other heroes in the city had given him when he'd resurfaced. Nothing over the top, no demands of explanation, but when he saw another hero around the city, when they teamed up against a baddie (which was bound to happen in a city this tight) they gave a 'hello' where before there had been nothing, and sometimes a pat on the back, and more often than not a casual offer that if something ever happened (the "again" was implied) he could contact them. Iron Man had talked to him personally about going to him if he ever needed anything, and Black Widow had given him a phone number, literally just scrawled it on a scrap of paper and shoved it in his hand. Sue Storm had come up to him and hugged him, and a long talk he'd had with Daredevil had ended with the man, the Devil of Hell's Kitchen, recommending a lawyer he trusted, if Spidey was ever in legal trouble. It was the same lawyer he'd ended up contacting.

The warmth and generosity was...overwhelming. And kind.

Peter was sure that Wade hadn't said anything to any of them. Besides that Deadpool had kind of a bad reputation and probably wouldn't be listened too with any seriousness, Peter also trusted that Wade wouldn't go around spilling his secrets. And that made it even more special, because that meant that these people had noticed his absence and actually *cared* about him.

Maybe he had more friends than he thought.

But none of that, the kindness and sense of safety, none of it helped him in his search for Wade. Which was patently ridiculous, because the man was vulgar, loudmouthed, and had a reputation the size of Montana. Shouldn't finding him be easy?

But it was in fact *not* easy. It was majorly fucking difficult.

It was actually by complete accident that Peter stumbled upon Wade while he was out in the early morning, dressed in his civvies, going to get overpriced coffee that he still half didn't believe he could afford, between an all-night baddie patrol and a daytime snooze.

He had his coffee in hand, walking out of the cafe, past a narrow alley, and just happened to glance over into the alley for just a second, and saw a be-hoodied man pop out of a dumpster, paper bag of goodies raised over his head protectively.

Peter froze in his tracks, eyes widening. It was barely light out yet, the sky a blue-tinged grey that still felt like a sleepy, soft time where no one should yet be awake, despite the hoards of people streaming around him, making their early-morning commutes to work and school. Peter squinted at the figure in the dumpster, a figure that still had yet to notice him, and considered the possibility that he was mistaken, that this broad-shouldered man, dressed in a red and blue hoodie with distinctively familiar webbing down the back, with hands that seemed as familiar to Peter as the web shooters he had at that moment wrapped around each wrist, *wasn't* Wade. It could be anyone, he told himself. Any broad-shouldered dude wearing a non-trademarked Spiderman hoodie could be digging around in this dumpster right now, it didn't necessarily need to be Wade. Peter had only known the man, what? A week? He couldn't possibly believe that he'd be able to recognize Wade based on just his shoulder to waist ratio and general dumpster-diving etiquette.

But then the man turned around, presumably to jump back out of the dumpster, and paused at the sight of Peter, eyes growing wide in the middle of his scarred and very familiar face. It was Wade.

Obviously, a tiny part of his mind gloated. And Peter cheered with it, because it was *Wade*.

"Peter," Wade said, high and surprised, and jerked forward half a step before remembering himself and jolting to a stop. The bag he'd held over his head he quickly dropped back into the dumpster behind him, not moving any other part of his body. "What are you doing around this side of town? Getting a cappuccino frappe mocha delight, no doubt. The coffee here at the place just around the corner is to die for. But not really. I mean, I guess, *really* really, for me. I've literally died there before but it was totally worth it for that sweet, sweet...well, bitter, bitter coffee. But enough of me rambling on, what about you? How are you liking being the richest prostitute in New York?" The rambling was slightly manic, with a definite edge to Wade's voice, but his question was genuine. He really wanted to know how Peter was doing and desired for Peter's answer to be positive.

Peter grinned at him. "I think I'm liking it quite a bit."

Wade laughed in absolute joy. "Good to hear it, Petey-pie! Buy anything fun yet? A Jacuzzi? A jet plane? The Michigan Wolverines?" He gave a sly little eyebrow wiggle. "They're the only sports

thing I care about.”

Peter shrugged. “I bought some stuff for the house. Paid for a few repairs Aunt May,” he swallowed, “that we could never afford before. I’ll probably spend a good chunk of it on college when the semester starts.”

“Ohhhh!” Wade squealed, clasping his hands together beneath his chin. “Going back? How exciting! Who knew you were an education in the making?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “What about you? What have you been up to?” Peter eyed the dumpster Wade was standing in. “Besides questing for breakfast in unusual places. Not that I’m one to talk. Dumpster diving used to be my favorite pastime.”

Wade shrugged. “Not much, Petey. Little dumpster-diving here, a little dine-and-dash there. Been wandering the bridges in my spare time. Found some really gnarly jumping spots, but I haven’t had a chance to test ‘em out yet.”

A little nugget of unease dropped into Peter’s stomach. “Not on yourself, hopefully,” Peter said, in faux levity.

Wade shrugged, but he hadn’t dropped his smile, and it still looked real. He still looked at least passingly happy. “Well you never know when you need a suicide spot, though I haven’t really been thinking about it for me for a long minute. And of course I could always dump a different body there, good jump place for me or whoever, but I’ve been trying to take a step back on the murder deal,” he held a hand out to Peter, “as we’ve discussed. But it’s a nice place to just hang out or curl up and fall asleep until some dickhead cop come by and tries to get you for napping in public, like Jesus, fuck! Let a guy sleep where he can!”

“Yeah,” Peter agreed half-heartedly, “it’s hard to find a place to sleep out on the streets where no one will disturb you or call the cops on you. I found roofs were pretty safe places.”

Wade snapped a finger at Peter. “Why didn’t *I* think of that?” Wade asked. “*Roofs!* That’d be perfect. Normal folk don’t go up there in the middle of the night. I could sleep there all night and no one would notice.”

“Hey, Wade?” Peter asked, a sinking suspicion turning his stomach sour.

“Yeah?”

“Why have you been sleeping on the streets?”

Wade blinked. “Well I don’t have enough money for a hotel room, right now. I gave you all the money I had. But don’t worry about me. My next job’ll get me back on my feet, no problem.”

Peter winced. “*All* of your money? Why would you do that?”

Wade shrugged. “I told you when I first hired you. Other people weren’t taking the job for less so I raised the price.”

“To all the money you had?” Peter shook his head in exasperation. “No offense, but that’s kinda stupid.”

“You come here, to *my* dumpster, and insult me?” Wade asked in counterfeit rage.

“Wade,” Peter snapped, “I didn’t want to land you in the same position *I* was in! Let me give you

some back.” Peter began digging in his pocket for his wallet, as if he was carrying a few hundred thousand dollars around in cash.

“No,” Wade said, slowly, but definitely. “I told you what I’d be giving you up front, and I paid you what I said I would. I’m not taking anything back. A promise is a promise. And payment is payment.”

Peter grimaced, but he brought his hand out of his pocket. “But that doesn’t mean you should be sleeping the streets. You have all those bolt-holes around the city! Why don’t you spend your nights in one of them? There are enough of them. You could sleep in a different one each night.”

“I gave *you* the keys,” Wade said dismissively.

“Yeah,” Peter said, “But that doesn’t mean you can’t—wait. Don’t tell me you don’t have any copies. Don’t tell me you didn’t *make* any copies before giving me that key ring.”

Wade shrugged. “Alright. I won’t tell you.”

Peter groaned. “Wade. I didn’t want to take *everything* from you. At least let me give you those keys back.”

“They’re yours now,” Wade insisted. “I gave them to you. They’re *yours*.”

Peter threw his hands up in exasperation, only remembering too late that he was still holding a cup of coffee when it flew out of his hand and went sailing over his head and across the street behind him. Wade snorted in laughter.

“Wade,” Peter said, worry and exhaustion working its way into his voice, “I’m not going to let you sacrifice things for me. Not now that I’m better able to take care of myself. Let me do *something* for you. You’ve given me so much.”

“Not enough,” Wade muttered, and crossed his hands across his chest.

“Enough of that,” Peter said. “You literally gave me a fortune, gave me back my home, and gave me enough places to stay safe in the city that I literally don’t know what to do with myself. And I don’t even know why. You went above and beyond for me. You paid me what you promised, but then gave me so much more, and I guess it makes sense since I’m Spiderman and everything, but —”

“It’s not because you’re Spiderman,” Wade interrupted.

Peter paused and looked once more up at Wade. “Than what is it? Why does it matter that I keep the safe houses or the money?”

“Because,” Wade started loudly, but then seemed to lose his nerve and wiped a hand down his face. “Because you mean something to me.”

“Spiderman me? Or me me?”

“You you,” Wade said. He moved forward again, and ran into the edge of the dumpster. He looked at it, looked down at Peter a few feet away, and levered himself over the edge of the dumpster, landing on his feet, but within arms distance of Peter. “That week I spent with you was the happiest I’ve been in—hah! I don’t even know. Decades? Eons? I can’t remember the last time I’ve been so happy.”

Peter could feel the soft smile forming on his face before he realized consciously he was doing it. “That week with you made me happy too.”

Wade rolled his eyes, but he did it with a smile. “Yeah, I imagine staying in a swank hotel after kicking it on the streets probably made for a euphoric week.”

Peter reached out and cuffed Wade gently on the side of the head. “That’s not what I meant. I mean yeah, sleeping in a real bed and eating real food was a goddamn luxury, but I meant that spending my time with you, getting to know you, that was the absolute best.”

Wade’s eyes were huge in wonder. “Really? I mean, I was probably the first person you’d hung out with for any length of time in a while, it was—”

“Wade,” Peter said, “it was because I liked spending time with *you*.” He blushed a little, but kept on talking. “Getting to know you, chatting and hanging out, it was amazing. I’ve never felt so—so *connected* to someone before. I love talking to you and spending time with you. And—and—” Peter swallowed thickly, felt as his face kept getting hotter and hotter, but couldn’t stand the thought of saying nothing. “And I know it was fake. The kissing and the hugging and the dates, I know it was all for a con job against Hydra, and I would have done anything to help take down Hydra, but I didn’t have to work hard to pretend to enjoy that stuff. I liked all of it, I liked the details of pretending to be you husband, Wade, and I think I like you. Like-like you.”

Wade was openly gaping, but it didn’t look like he was capable of forming any words yet.

“You don’t have to like me back,” Peter said, and pressed a hand against the warm flush of his cheek. He couldn’t look Wade in the eye and said, “I know it’s unlikely that you have similarly romantic emotions towards me, but I’ve been trying to find you so I could let you know that I *do* like you, just in case you might like me back. And then maybe I could take you on a date. It’d be only fair after all the dates you’ve taken me on, no matter how fake they were.”

“They weren’t,” Wade croaked, and Peter’s head jerked up.

“What do you mean?” Peter asked, suddenly breathless, and filled with the same hope he’d been pushing down and down and down since the first hint of love for Wade had bubbled up in his heart.

“Fake,” Wade said roughly, and swallowed. When he spoke again his voice wasn’t as broken. “They weren’t fake. I mean, it was for a purpose, I wasn’t lying about the fake spouse thing, or Hydra, obviously. I don’t want you thinking that at all.” His voice raised in panic and Peter was quick to dissuade Wade from that thought.

“I didn’t think you meant it that way.”

“Ok,” Wade breathed out. “But I never thought of them as fake. They might have been for a reason, but I really did like you,” his own cheeks started to heat up, giving off a soft pink glow, as he added, “too.” He took a deep breath. “I mean, you were great, and I wanted to buy you dinner, and buy you things, and give you all the homes in the city that I’d hoarded for years because they kept me safe, because suddenly keeping you safe seemed way more important than keeping me safe. Peter, I…” and there his courage seemed to fail him. He reached up and tugged at the hood of his hoodie self-consciously, dragging it lower over his head.

“Oh,” Peter breathed out. “Well, in that case, will you go on a date with me?”

Wade’s hands dropped again to his sides, in surprise. “Really? Just like that?”

“Just like that,” Peter agreed. “I’ve already been married to you, I think a date shouldn’t be any more difficult than that.”

Wade guffawed, and watching Wade come over with laughter, any hint of self-consciousness or self-pity draining from his body, leaving him loose and happy, it was like watching the sun rise.

“A coffee date?” Wade asked, after his mirth subsided.

Peter looked at his empty hand, the one that had been clutching his cup of joe before he’d accidentally and unceremoniously thrown it across the street. “I haven’t had such great luck with coffee recently.”

Wade laughed again. “See this is why I like you, Pete. You’re like a comedian I don’t gotta pay to see.”

“You just like me for my humor?” Peter asked melodramatically. “How dare you! I want a divorce.”

“You won’t divorce me. I’m a catch!”

“You’re right,” Peter said. “People are all over, trying to steal you from me. But I won’t let them.”

Wade grinned. “So, a date?”

“A date,” Peter agreed.

“When?” Wade asked.

“Are you busy right now?” Peter asked, tripping over his own tongue and swallowing past a small lump of excitement that threatened to incapacitate his ability to act restrained. He was about ready to burst. Could Wade see how excited he was? He tried to tone it down, but it was impossible based on the untamable euphoria thrumming just beneath his skin in a tightly wound tremor he could feel but not see.

Wade sniffed at the sleeve of his hoodie and wrinkled his nose. “I think if we’re gonna go out I should probably clean up a little first. I smell like the dumpster I’ve been swimming in, and I’m trying to make a good impression.”

“I already know you,” Peter pointed out.

“I didn’t say a good *first* impression,” Wade said. “Listen Pete. I like you. And I wanna not smell like a dumpster for you.”

Peter bit his lip to hold back a smile. “Ok.”

“Now I just gotta find the closest McDonalds.”

“Wash up in the sink?”

Wade nodded. “Wash up in the sink.”

Peter grimaced. “Come back to my place. You can wash up in a shower and change into some clean clothes. I think I’ve got some that’ll fit you, if all of yours could do with a run through the wash.”

Wade waved his hands back and forth in front of him. “I couldn’t!”

But this was one thing Peter would put his foot down for. “You fed me, clothed me, took care of me, and befriended me. It’s my turn. Come home with me. Heck, stay as long as you’d like. But I’m not leaving you out on the streets. Not when I have the means to help you, dating or not.”

Wade made a face. “Won’t that be kinda weird? Me staying in your house. While we’re dating? I mean, a week of fake-spousing, and then a month of nothing doesn’t really lay the groundwork for moving in together. That’s not exactly normal.”

Peter rolled his eyes. “And when exactly have we ever been normal?”

Wade pondered that for a moment, and then his face lit up. “Never! Huh, alright, and you sure it won’t be weird?”

“We’ve already lived together. Only this time it’ll be better because we know we like each other, and we won’t have to pretend to be people we’re not, or practice pretending to be people that we’re not. It seems like the best possible circumstance.”

Wade grinned, ear to ear. “I think I want to kiss you.”

Peter stepped forward, closer than was merely friendly, until their chests were practically touching and they both had to tilt their heads to keep from bumping chins. “Well what’s stopping you?”

Wade gulped, his pupils dilating. “The dumpster smell? The two weeks without a good washing up? My generally gross face or murderous past?”

“Oh my god, Wade,” Peter said quietly, pressing even closer, “stop trying to scare me off and kiss me.”

Wade chuckled. “As you wish,” he said, and lowered his face the scant centimeters needed to reach Peter’s lips.

It was delightful, and in that moment Peter sent out a wish to the universe, or to whatever star was listening, that he could be this happy, with Wade, forever.

Chapter End Notes

I really hope you all had as much fun reading this as I had writing it. And thank you all for sticking with it. It means a lot :D

You're all the best

End Notes

I am too tired, but I promised to put this out, so here it is. I know the title doesn't make sense now. I hope it someday *will* make sense, but I make no promises

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